

2011

# Ives's seasonal songs

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# IVES'S SEASONAL SONGS

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Music

In

The Department of Music

by  
Warren Kimball  
B.M., Louisiana College, 2008  
December 2011

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

It is with heartfelt gratitude that I wish to thank all of those who have helped make this thesis possible, especially my advisor Brett Boutwell, whose ideas, suggestions, proofreading, and patience were invaluable. Special thanks are also due to the other members of my committee, Andreas Giger and Allison McFarland, not only for their support and work on this thesis but for their instruction in the classroom as well. Lastly, I would like to thank my wonderful family, especially my wife Heather and daughter Madeleine for their wonderful love, patience, and support throughout this entire endeavor.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	3
METHOD AND APPROACH.....	7
2 “YEARS OF APPRENTICESHIP,” 1894–1902 .....	10
THE YALE YEARS.....	10
THE FIRST SEASONAL SONGS .....	14
“AMBIGUOUS” DIRECTIONS .....	26
3 COURTSHIP SONGS: 1902–1908 .....	29
CHARLES AND HARMONY .....	33
4 MATURITY: 1908–1923.....	44
MARRIAGE, BUSINESS, AND MATURITY .....	44
“MAPLE LEAVES” AND “YELLOW LEAVES” ....	46
CONCLUSION .....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	65
APPENDIX	
LETTERS OF PERMISSION FOR EXAMPLES.....	69
VITA .....	72

## **ABSTRACT**

Throughout his career, Charles Ives composed seven songs on texts that in some manner concern the yearly seasons. Unexamined by scholars to any depth, and never heretofore considered as a group, these pieces have typically been treated in tandem with Ives's other songs about nature. Studied as a set, however, they reveal the theme of seasonal change to be an artistic topic of significant, enduring appeal to the composer. Although these pieces are stylistically diverse, examining them as a group helps us to better understand Ives's maturation as a composer, the seasonal topic serving usefully as a constant around which we may evaluate his evolving aesthetic ideals and deepening philosophical convictions. This thesis examines the seasonal songs in chronological order, drawing upon historical, musical, and literary analysis as a means of situating them in Ives's larger oeuvre while arguing for their value as exemplary early twentieth-century art songs in their own right.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The songs of Charles Ives display a great breadth of subject matter. In a 1934 review of *114 songs*, Aaron Copland noted the collection's diversity:

Almost every kind of song can be found—delicate lyrics, dramatic poems, sentimental ballads, German, French, and Italian songs, war songs, songs of religious sentiment, street songs, humorous songs, hymn tunes, folk tunes, encore songs, songs adapted from orchestral scores, piano works and violin sonatas; intimate songs, cowboy songs, and mass songs. Songs of every character and description<sup>1</sup>

Omitted from Copland's list, however, is a category of songs that has been similarly neglected in the vast body of Ives scholarship: songs on texts concerning the yearly seasons. Given the centrality of nature to literary transcendentalism, one might presume that Ives's attraction to the seasons as a topic grew directly from his well-known interest in Emerson, Thoreau, and their contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> As J. Peter Burkholder has demonstrated, however, Ives was not fully aware of transcendentalism early in his life.<sup>3</sup> This fact is reflected well in the seasonal songs' diversity: although the later songs draw upon the seasons to articulate a view of the universal in line with transcendental thought, the earlier works treat seasonal change as a straightforward metaphor for romantic love.

Ives composed seven songs that concern the seasons in some manner, and all reflect the evolving network of literary, philosophical, and biographical sources that shaped his development as a composer. These songs do not exhibit a consistent musical style, as they were composed at different times in his career; likewise, their texts differ in poetic style, despite the presence of a common motif. Considered collectively, however, the songs have much to offer

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron Copland, "One Hundred and Fourteen Songs [*114 Songs*]," in *Charles Ives and His World*, ed. J. Peter Burkholder (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 309.

<sup>2</sup> In J. Peter Burkholder, *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), the author discusses the origin and development of scholarship that places Ives in the transcendental tradition. He confirms that this view of Ives is accurate for several reasons, including the fact that the idea of Ives as a transcendentalist may have originated from Ives himself. He also discusses in detail the complications and misconceptions that have plagued this topic in Ives scholarship.

<sup>3</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 20.

Ives scholars. Beyond serving as testaments to Ives's attraction to the seasons as a subject of artistic inspiration and philosophical contemplation, they speak to his development as a composer and a thinker. As an outwardly heterogeneous group of works united by a literary topic, this collection affords the opportunity to consider the career-long evolution of Ives's musical style and philosophical principles in the presence of a constant. Such an approach may be especially beneficial given the long-standing questions over oeuvre periodization and style trajectory that remain at the core of Ives scholarship to the present day. The term "philosophical principles" is used here to describe the general ideals, beliefs, and schools of thought with which Ives identified. It encompasses what Burkholder describes as "the spiritual values, the moral strengths, and the religious impulses" extolled in Ives's *Essays Before a Sonata*; the transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau; the idealistic positions Ives staked on political and social issues; and the ambitious convictions of his younger days as influenced by professors such as William Lyon Phelps and Horatio Parker.<sup>4</sup>

The significance of this study stems from several gaps in Ives scholarship, which are due mostly to Ives's large number of compositions. First, no scholar mentions Ives's use of seasonal topics or themes. While much thought is given to elements of nature in his compositions and the ways in which these fit into his transcendental beliefs, the seasonal topic has been neglected. Second, most of the songs in this study have received little or no scholarly attention or analysis, and most are infrequently performed and recorded in comparison with Ives's other songs. This study aims to draw attention to these songs as some of Ives's most poignant works, as well as excellent examples of early twentieth century art songs. Further research into Ives's less appreciated songs would continue to aid in our understanding of his ideas and musical style as well as boost appreciation for these songs as works worthy of performance and contemplation.

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<sup>4</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 1.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of Ives scholarship is nearly as colorful as the composer himself. In recent years, the body of Ives research has become a subject of scholarship in itself. In the introduction to her 2008 book *Charles Ives Reconsidered*, Gayle Sherwood Magee reconstructs the view of Ives's life built by scholars since before Ives's death in 1954 through the present day.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, the second edition of Magee's book *Charles Ives: A Research and Information Guide* offers as its preface a "Short History of Ives Studies," in which the author examines trends in Ives research and describes the positions taken by several of the most important scholars on Ives.<sup>6</sup> Drew Massey's article "The Problems of Ives's Revisions, 1973–87" discusses in great detail the influence of John Kirkpatrick on both Ives scholarship and the editing of Ives's music.<sup>7</sup>

Ives scholarship has its roots in performance and publication reviews from the 1920s, when his music began to draw public attention. Some of the earliest reviews of Ives's pieces were written by Henry Bellamann, a scholar of literature and music who published reviews of both *114 Songs* and *Sonata No. 2 for Piano: Concord, Mass., 1840–60*. The relationship between Ives and Bellamann, including a collaborative effort on two songs, will be examined further in Chapter 4. Ives's music also became popular with the American musical modernists such as Henry Cowell and Nicolas Slonimsky. Editions of his pieces along with critical commentary began to appear in publications such as *Modern Music*, including an important and thoughtful review of *114 Songs* by Aaron Copland, cited above.<sup>8</sup> Magazine and newspaper reviews such as those by Bellamann and Copland constitute much of the early writings on Ives.

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<sup>5</sup> Gayle Sherwood Magee, *Charles Ives Reconsidered* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 1–6.

<sup>6</sup> Gayle Sherwood Magee, *Charles Ives: A Research and Information Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), vii–ix.

<sup>7</sup> Drew Massey, "The Problem of Ives's Revisions, 1973–1987," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 599–645.

<sup>8</sup> Bellamann's and Copland's reviews, as well as many other early reviews can be found in Burkholder, *Charles Ives and His World*, 273–260.



In 1955, Henry Cowell and his wife Sydney published their important and influential biography of Ives. According to Magee, this “first book-length biography” was “enormously influential for decades.”<sup>9</sup> The Cowells drew most of their information from autobiographical statements lent to them by Ives during the 1940s.<sup>10</sup> Frank Rossiter points out that the book “presented Ives as ‘one of the four great creative figures in music of the first half of the twentieth century,’” even though it “gave a somewhat idealistic and sentimentally popular view of Ives’s life and contained numerous mistakes of fact.”<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the following decades, premieres of his works and scholarly considerations of them began to appear more frequently as the composer’s popularity grew. In 1972, John Kirkpatrick’s critical edition of Ives’s *Memos* was published, greatly increasing the amount of primary biographical material available for study. According to Kirkpatrick, the Cowells’ biography “included less than one-sixth” of the material that could be found in *Memos*.<sup>12</sup> In the wake of this publication, Frank Rossiter’s book *Charles Ives and His America* was the first major biography on Ives since the Cowells’ publication. This work reconsidered Ives’s position in music history and “analyzed Ives as a product of his society,” rejecting the popular notion that Ives’s creativity was born out of complete isolation.<sup>13</sup>

Most recently, Ives scholarship has followed in the path of Rossiter’s work, as researchers have attempted to correct popular concepts that Ives was an isolated composer who was unaware of any of the trends, concepts, and techniques present in the modern music of the early twentieth century, and who was uninfluenced by the music and compositional practices of

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<sup>9</sup> Magee, *Charles Ives: A Research and Information Guide*, 13. On the relationship between Ives and the Cowells, see also David Paul, “From Ethnographer to Cold War Icon: Charles Ives through the Eyes of Henry and Sidney Cowell,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 399–457.

<sup>10</sup> Charles E. Ives, *Memos*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 19.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America* (New York: Liveright, 1975), 302.

<sup>12</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Magee, *Charles Ives: A Research and Information Guide*, x.

past and contemporary Europeans. Writers like Robert Morgan and J. Peter Burkholder have written extensively on Ives's debt to classical European composition, as well as helped to define the origin of Ives's compositional practices.<sup>14</sup> Their work, along with that of others, has led to a better understanding of Ives as a composer who made radical new music while still working within the language of western art music.

Alongside these general volumes, studies of narrower focus and greater depth began to appear. These included examinations of specific genres, groups of compositions, and individual works, along with various other topics. Most relevant to the present study are those writings that focus on Ives's song literature. Most notable have been H. Wiley Hitchcock's invaluable scholarly contributions to the study of Ives's song literature. His article "Ives's '114 [+ 15] Songs' and What He Thought of Them" provides extensive commentary on many of Ives's songs and generates a better understanding of Ives's song literature as a whole.<sup>15</sup> In addition, his earlier article "'A Grand and Glorious Noise': Charles Ives as Lyricist" provides great insight into the texts of Ives's songs, including those he chose, edited, or wrote himself.<sup>16</sup> His most significant contribution to Ives scholarship, however, was *Charles Ives: 129 Songs*, his critical edition of Ives's own *114 Songs* supplemented with fifteen previously unpublished works.<sup>17</sup> It provides extensive commentary on Hitchcock's editorial practices and an overview of Ives's song

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Robert P. Morgan, "'The Things Our Fathers Loved': Charles Ives and the European Tradition," in *Ives Studies*, ed. Philip Lambert (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3–26; Geoffrey Block and J. Peter Burkholder, eds., *Charles Ives and the Classical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); J. Peter Burkholder, "The Organist in Ives," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 255–310.

<sup>15</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, "Ives's '114 [+ 15] Songs' and What He Thought of Them," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 97–144.

<sup>16</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, "'A Grand and Glorious Noise': Charles Ives as Lyricist," *American Music* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 26–44.

<sup>17</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, ed., *Charles Ives: 129 Songs*, vol. 47 of *Recent Researches in American Music* (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2004). John Kirkpatrick has edited two collections of Ives's songs which contain pieces found in neither Ives's *114 Songs* nor Hitchcock's *129 Songs*. These are Charles Ives, *Eleven Songs and Two Harmonizations*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1968) and Charles E. Ives, *Forty Earlier Songs: Critical Edition*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (USA: Associated Music Publishers, Peer International, Theodore Presser Company, 1993).

composition as a whole. In these studies, Hitchcock not only focuses on the totality of Ives's song literature, but on specific groups of songs as well. The basis for groupings include music and text similarities, thematic similarities, dates of composition, and combinations of these and other elements. Hitchcock does this in order to illuminate tendencies, themes, and differences among Ives's songs. There are also numerous studies by other scholars that focus on individual songs or groups of songs in order to demonstrate techniques and trends in Ives's music or to illuminate the philosophical background or ideological standpoint of the songs. The article "'Scarce Heard amidst the Guns Below': Intertextuality and Meaning in Charles Ives's War Songs" by Alan Houtchens and Janis P. Stout thoroughly examines a group of four songs that deal with war themes, providing in-depth analysis of the music, background contextual information on the texts, and explanations of their philosophical underpinnings.<sup>18</sup> The current study has a similar aim.

Also integral to the creation of this thesis were the writings by others that illuminate Ives's philosophy and explore the way in which it is embodied in his songs. For a general understanding of Ives's mature philosophy, his own writings are the primary source. In his *Memos* and *Essays Before a Sonata* Ives revealed the importance that others, such as his father, Horatio Parker, and John C. Griggs had on his life and music. The *Essays* explain in great detail the artistic aims of his *Concord Sonata*, many of which can be applied to his mature compositions in general. Some of the ideas from these primary sources will be discussed further in the subsequent chapters. It is important to note that while Ives's primary writings give great insight into his mature compositions, they fail to accurately discuss his earlier compositions.

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<sup>18</sup> Alan Houtchens and Janis P. Stout, "'Scarce Heard amidst the Guns Below': Intertextuality and Meaning in Charles Ives's War Songs," *Journal of Musicology* 15, no.1 (Winter 1997): 66–97.

J. Peter Burkholder's book *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music* was an essential reference volume for this study. Burkholder's work examines Ives's compositions, writings, and family history to provide an in-depth analysis of his philosophy and musical style. The origin of transcendental philosophy in Ives's mature works is addressed, but importance is also placed on his earlier works and ideas. Burkholder divided Ives's life into six different periods, all of which he examines in detail. Other studies that aid in understanding Ives' philosophy are Jan Swafford's *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* and Rosalie Sandra Perry's *Charles Ives and the American Mind*.<sup>19</sup> Swafford's discussion of Ives's courtship of Harmony Twichell was decidedly useful in understanding the songs resulting from their collaborations, and Perry's work has influenced Chapter four's discussion of realism in Ives's songs.

### **METHOD AND APPROACH**

This study will take the form of a chronological examination of Ives's seasonally themed songs. Because Ives drew upon this literary motif throughout his compositional career, such an approach allows for an in-depth examination of each song within its historical framework as well as an overall examination of the entire group of songs. The stylistic analysis of each song is accompanied by an historical examination of its text, helping to provide a background for Ives's philosophical principles and aiding in understanding their embodiment in his music.

As a point of departure, this study will use the periodization of Ives's life laid forth by J. Peter Burkholder in his book *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music*. This serves not only an organizational purpose, but also frames each song within its historical context. At times, songs that stylistically fall within a certain period were composed several years prior to Burkholder's designated ending date for that period. Keeping in mind the nature of Ives's career and

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<sup>19</sup> Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); Rosalie Sandra Perry, *Charles Ives and the American Mind* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1974).

compositional practices, this is not abnormal; Ives frequently composed pieces in different styles simultaneously, and the known dates for many of his pieces are only approximate. This study aspires to refine our general understanding of Ives's development, both musical and philosophical.

The discussion will begin in Chapter 2, which will focus on songs from early in Ives's career. Burkholder describes the phase of his life from ca. 1894–1902 as his “apprenticeship.”<sup>20</sup> This period, during which Ives's compositional style was still heavily influenced by his teacher Horatio Parker, begins with Ives's entrance into Yale University in 1894 and ends with his departure from his last paid organist position at Central Presbyterian Church in Manhattan in June of 1902.<sup>21</sup> This chapter will include a discussion of the songs “In Autumn” (ca.1896), “In April-Tide” (ca.1896–7), and “The Ending Year” (1902). All three of these songs date from Ives's years at Yale, and their music resembles the German romantic style of the pieces on which they were modeled, as opposed to the modern sound of Ives's later, mature works. The texts of these pieces are drawn from the writings of Victorian poets such as Arthur O'Shaughnessy and Clinton Scollard.

Chapter 3 will contain discussion of seasonal songs from the portion of Ives's career that Burkholder labels “innovation and synthesis.”<sup>22</sup> This period ranges from 1902 until 1908, the year of Ives's marriage to Harmony Twichell. The two included from this period are “Spring Song” and “Autumn.” “Autumn” was composed in 1907 on text by his then-fiancée Harmony, who had written a letter to Ives describing the autumn weather and the joy it brought her: “These days are so heavenly—I've always called this time of year the peace of God, to myself—the earth has done her year's work and seems to be resting and these days seem to be a smile of

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<sup>20</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 43-44.

approval.”<sup>23</sup> A collaborative effort, and one whose genesis is well documented in Ives’s correspondence, “Autumn” offers a special insight into the composer’s life and work during the period of his engagement to Harmony.<sup>24</sup>

Chapter 4 will contain a discussion of those songs falling during the period of Ives’s compositional career that Burkholder labels “maturity,” which ranges from 1908–1918. During this time Ives developed a new sense of idealism and an interest in literature, partly due to Harmony’s influence.<sup>25</sup> The two seasonally themed songs dating to this period are “Maple Leaves” and “Yellow Leaves.” Both the texts and music of these songs are strikingly similar, and they both attempt to convey the transcendental idea of the universal through their evocation of the seasons. Their musical style is much less conventional than the style of some earlier songs, and they contain many of the techniques that have become closely associated with Ives’s maturity. “Maple Leaves,” written in 1920, uses a quatrain by Thomas Bailey Aldrich that was published in 1876. The poem is a short, realistic description of the changing and falling leaves in autumn. Aldrich’s text reflects the nineteenth-century literary tradition of realism. And although the text for “Yellow Leaves” was written decades after that of “Maple Leaves,” Ives uses the songs to attain similar musical goals.

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<sup>23</sup> Hitchcock, ““A Grand and Glorious Noise!”: Charles Ives as Lyricist,” 14.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes*, 6.

## CHAPTER 2: “YEARS OF APPRENTICESHIP,” 1894–1902

### THE YALE YEARS

Ives's entrance into Yale University in 1894 marked the beginning of the period of his life that Peter Burkholder labels “years of apprenticeship.”<sup>1</sup> This was a significant time in Ives's life; he began his studies at Yale in the fall of 1894, only to have his father pass away from a stroke a few months later on November 4th. He also began his tenure as organist at Center Church in New Haven in September of the same year. This period signified for Ives what Burkholder describes as a time of “redirection and preparation.”<sup>2</sup> Ives was in a sense moving away from the things that defined his childhood in Danbury, Connecticut: his relationship with his father had become strained in the period leading up to his death, he moved away from the musical genres that occupied Danbury's musical life and began an education that would introduce him to the compositional tools and musical ideas that helped form his compositional career.<sup>3</sup>

In keeping with the many facets of Ives's personal life at this time were the many styles in which he composed. Ives continued to compose the type of experimental pieces that he learned to create under his father's tutelage. These pieces were sometimes performed by the Hyperion Theater Orchestra or sometimes by Ives himself on the organ during church services,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart Feder, *Charles Ives “My Father's Song”: A Psychoanalytic Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 129. Feder claims that in his first year at Yale Ives was trying become more independent while his father George was trying to maintain control on his life, thus causing some strain. This is also apparent in the letters from this period, which can be found in Tom C. Owens, ed., *The Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

much to the dismay of the congregation.<sup>4</sup> In his music classes with Horatio Parker he composed art songs and symphonic works in the German romantic style of Brahms and Schumann. He was also very active in Yale's vernacular music life, composing "humorous pieces, sentimental love ballads, and college songs," most of which genres he would abandon upon graduation.<sup>5</sup> Outside of all these aspects of his compositional activities from this time, however, stand his seasonal songs. While the two composed at Yale fall somewhat into the category of "sentimental love ballad," they seem to strive for higher artistic goals, such as those of an art song. They are in effect the result of all of Ives's differing compositional paths converging, while also a reflection of his burgeoning interest in literature. Elements of the experimental, the vernacular, and the classical would all make their way into these songs, giving them a unique character. In order to better understand these songs and their composer, it is helpful to point out the events and people who were instrumental in shaping Ives's musical style and philosophical principles during this time, when he was most impressionable.

George Ives was one of the most influential figures in his son's life, and their relationship has caused much critical and scholarly discussion.<sup>6</sup> In confessing the impact of his father's death, Ives stated, "I went around looking and looking for some man to sort of help fill up that awful vacuum I was carrying around with me."<sup>7</sup> One man Ives originally considered for the role, if only briefly, was Horatio Parker, his music professor at Yale.<sup>8</sup> The nature of Parker's influence on Ives has been contested by scholars as a result of Ives's comments about him in his later writings. In his *Memos*, Ives repeatedly criticized Parker for his strict adherence to European

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<sup>4</sup> Charles E. Ives, *Memos*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 51. Ives mentions "trying out" different experiments during church services, where some of the members of the congregation, who were not used to this type of music, were prone to "misunderstand and be disturbed."

<sup>5</sup> Frank Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America* (New York: Liveright, 1975), 64.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: Feder, *Charles Ives "My Father's Song"* and Ives, *Memos*, 44–48.

<sup>7</sup> Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America*, 61–62.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.



conventions and rules.<sup>9</sup> Frank Rossiter elaborated on this idea in his pioneering biography on Ives, stating, “It was not so much Parker the individual as Parker the symbol that had an important influence upon Ives at Yale,” and that “Parker symbolized European training [and]...completed the process, begun by Ives’s father, of turning Ives against this tradition of European study.”<sup>10</sup> This idea has been debated in recent years, however. Gayle Sherwood Magee, in continuing a line of study begun in the collection of essays *Charles Ives and the Classical Tradition*, argues that without Parker’s instruction, Ives would not have been equipped with the necessary skills to compose his large-scale works, which were largely based on European classical models.<sup>11</sup> What is sure, however, is that Parker and his instruction had a lasting effect on Ives. Parker is mentioned numerous times in Ives’s *Memos* and is almost always compared to his father. Ives’s remarks on Parker range from the complimentary to the critical. On one hand, he remarked, “I had and have a great respect and admiration for Parker and most of his music. (It was seldom trivial—his choral works have a dignity and depth that many of [his] contemporaries, especially in the [field of] religious and choral composition, did not have. Parker had ideals that carried him higher than the popular).” Yet he also wrote, “he was governed too much by the German rule, and in some ways was somewhat hardboiled.”<sup>12</sup> These comments, along with those that compare Parker and George Ives, reveal a respect for the professor, but also a need for Ives in his later years to separate himself from the European training he received from him.

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<sup>9</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 115–116.

<sup>10</sup> Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America*, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Block and Peter Burkholder, eds. *Charles Ives and the Classical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Gayle Sherwood Magee, *Charles Ives Reconsidered* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 48.

<sup>12</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 49.

Likewise influential in Ives's life at the time was Dr. John Cornelius Griggs, music director at Center Church and Ives's supervisor. Ives and Griggs struck up a friendship that would last for the remainder of their lives. Ives remembered of Griggs: "Dr. Griggs...was the only musician friend of mine that showed any interest, toleration, or tried to understand the way I felt about some things in music."<sup>13</sup> Working with Griggs likely provided Ives a refreshing change from the supervisor of his previous organist position. Prior to serving as organist at Center Church, Ives worked at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in New Haven under the leadership of Charles Bonney. Ives remembered Bonney as "strict, demanding, and unpleasant," but may have been led by him to develop the "natural" vocal style that he ultimately used in his compositions.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of what Bonney taught Ives, Griggs was much more important to him as a role model and friend. Years later, as a testament to their lasting friendship, Ives sent a copy of his *Essays Before a Sonata* to Griggs, who was working as a missionary in China at the time. In his reply, Griggs respectfully disagreed with Ives's ideas in the *Essays*, but this discourse was exactly what Ives respected and cherished about their friendship: "He didn't like all the things I wrote by any means, but he was always willing to listen and discuss anything seriously."<sup>15</sup>

All of these figures were important in shaping Ives into the composer and the person he would become. They do not, however, help answer the question of why Ives was drawn to texts concerning the yearly seasons in composing so many of his songs. At this point in his life, unlike in his later years, Ives wrote little about his beliefs or ideals. From the death of his father until his courtship of Harmony Twichell, he wrote few letters, and those written before this time reveal no

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<sup>13</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 116.

<sup>14</sup> Owens, *Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives*, 13, 27. Owens writes, "The ideas about a natural style of singing that he [Bonney] impressed on Ives during his voice lessons seem to have found an outlet in many of Ives's songs."

<sup>15</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 116.

clues regarding his interest in the seasons. His choice of texts, however, proves that Ives was somehow interested in using the seasons as a subject for his songs.

### **THE FIRST SEASONAL SONGS**

“In Autumn,” composed ca. 1896, is one of the first examples of Ives’s use of the seasonal theme.<sup>16</sup> The text Ives chose for this song was written by the little known British poet Arthur William Edgar O’Shaughnessy, born in London in 1844.<sup>17</sup> O’Shaughnessy worked in the library of the British museum and, besides writing, studied and worked in the field of herpetology.<sup>18</sup> Although his earliest collection of poetry drew some attention he failed to garner any long-term respect for his work during his short lifetime.<sup>19</sup>

The poem Ives used for “In Autumn,” simply titled “Song,” comes from O’Shaughnessy’s collection of poems titled *Music and Moonlight: Poems and Songs*, published in 1874, the year of Ives’s birth. Neither the poem nor the author have been previously identified as the source for the song’s text, possibly because Ives only set the second stanza or perhaps the relative obscurity of the poet.<sup>20</sup> How Ives came to know this poem is unknown as well, but his interest in it is not surprising. *Music and Moonlight* would have had an obvious appeal to the young, aspiring musician that was Ives, as many of the poems deal with music as a subject, some with titles such as “Song,” a seemingly open invitation to be set to music.

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<sup>16</sup> On the piece’s date of composition, see Charles E. Ives, *Forty Earlier Songs*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (Bryn Mawr: Associated Music Publishers, Peer International, Theodore Presser Company, 1993), 9; Gayle Sherwood, *Charles Ives: A Research and Information Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 205. In the most recently published edition of the song, Kirkpatrick gives the date “1892?”; however, in *Charles Ives: A Research and Information Guide* Gayle Sherwood Magee lists the date as ca. 1896. This date is based on work by Burkholder, Sherwood, and Sinclair, whose dates are the most generally accepted among scholars. Dates for pieces will be drawn from this source for the remainder of this study.

<sup>17</sup> Oskar Brönnert, *Das Leben Arthur O’Shaughnessy’s* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1933), 11.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Garnett, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1895), 42:309.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. According to Garnett, his first collection, *Epic of Women*, “astonished readers.” They were however let down with his following publications due to his “mechanical fluency” that “condemned [him] to sterile repetition.”

<sup>20</sup> The author is listed unknown in both Ives, *Forty Earlier Songs*, 9 and James B. Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 409.

The poem is fairly conventional, consisting of four stanzas, each eight lines apiece, with each line consisting of a varying number of iambic feet. Each stanza could be broken up into two smaller four-line stanzas, as Ives did in his song:

The skies seemed true above thee,  
The rose true on the tree;  
The bird seemed true the summer through,  
But all proved false to me.

World! Is there one good thing in you,  
Life, love, or death – or what?  
Since lips that sang, I love thee,  
Have said, I love thee not?<sup>21</sup>

In the text of the first four lines of the first stanza above (stanza 2 in the source poem), O'Shaughnessy describes the seemingly lovely summer, using positive images of skies, roses, and birds to highlight the summer's assigned qualities of joy and peace. This, however, is offset by the tension created between his two verbs: "seemed" and "proved false," which create within the poem a subtheme of perception versus reality. The reader is never allowed to enjoy the pleasant summer description because of the writer's foreshadowing of the letdown he experienced; the verb "seemed" alerts the reader that despite the lovely description, all is not well. The fourth line affirms this, with the emphasis placed on the verb "proved" and the descriptor "false." The seasonal aspect of this song is thus a literary device: O'Shaughnessy describes summer as a positive, enjoyable time that is proven false in retrospect because of lost love. In setting the poem, Ives took this a step further. By titling his song "In Autumn," which is never mentioned in O'Shaughnessy's text, Ives was relating the negative feelings of lost love to the autumn season. This demonstrates one instance of Ives placing more emphasis than the author on the seasonal aspect of a text.

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<sup>21</sup> Arthur O'Shaughnessy, *Music and Moonlight: Poems and Songs* (New York: Garland, 1977), 42. The space added between the two sections is mine.

In this poem, as well as Ives's setting of it, the seasons described are assigned a positive or negative quality. This quality is usually first apparent in the text, but can also manifest itself in the musical setting, aiding in setting a particular tone for that piece. "In Autumn" openly discusses the summer season in a (seemingly) positive light. This is reflected in the language of the text as well as Ives's setting. There is however, an implied quality given to autumn, specifically by Ives and not O'Shaughnessy. As noted above, by titling the song "In Autumn," as opposed to O'Shaughnessy's title "Song," Ives aligned the expressed emotions of lost love from the text with the autumn season. This assigned quality, which does not appear in the text alone, is not apparent in the musical setting. It is, nonetheless, unusual in that Ives almost always used texts which assign a positive quality to autumn.

In general, Ives's setting stays true to the character of the poem. Shown in Example 2-1, his rhythms mirror the natural iambic meter of the text, maintaining O'Shaughnessy's rhythmic structure. The melody is straightforward and diatonic, not straying from the given key of G major and hardly extending an octave in range. Ives kept O'Shaughnessy's topical division of the stanza into two sections as well, strophically setting each half of the stanza. He does, however, place emphasis on different words than O'Shaughnessy. Rather than treating the verbs as the significant words, Ives placed emphasis on the seasonal nouns "skies," "rose," "bird," and "summer" by placing these words on downbeats and assigning them longer rhythmic durations. In doing so Ives once again placed, albeit subtly and perhaps unconsciously, more emphasis on the seasonal aspect of the song than the original author.

Example 2–1. Charles Ives, “In Autumn,” mm. 1–13.

*Crazioso (not too slowly)* *[mp]* *con moto*

The skies seemed true - a - bove thee, The

*[mp]* *cantabile*

rose true - on the tree, The bird seemed true - the sum - mer through, But all proved false to me.

*rit.* *ri -*

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Musically the piece was composed in a popular vein, mimicking the parlor songs of the day and aligning this song with the other popular pieces Ives composed during his time at Yale. The accompaniment is simple, the melody singable, and the text accessible. The first stanza also utilizes a degree of text painting. In m. 6, to the words “skies seemed true above,” the melody ascends from its second lowest pitch on “skies” to its second highest pitch on “above,” both on the dominant pitch D, an octave apart. In m. 11 on the word “summer,” the melody and harmony deceptively move from a  $ii_5^6$  chord to a dominant seventh chord in second inversion on C#, an

augmented fourth above the tonic G. This surprising harmony highlights in the text summer's deception of the speaker. The line then closes in the next two measures, eventually cadencing on the tonic while the speaker recites the words "all proved false to me." The melody becomes stagnant at the end of the phrase and settles on the dominant pitch D on these words, once again highlighting the meaning of the text and showing the speaker's disappointment.

The second stanza in Ives's setting contains a near-repetition of the first stanza's music, with only a slight change in the melody that accounts for the varying number of syllables in the poem's lines. The descriptive seasonal words that Ives highlighted in the first stanza are absent here, changing the focus. The melody uses the same abrupt harmonic shift mentioned earlier, this time in m. 22 on the words "I love thee." Here it serves the same purpose as before, underscoring the mendacity of this statement. The melody then once again settles and remains on the dominant D, now to the words "Now say 'I love thee not.'" This final statement seals the speaker's fate, while the repeating low D accentuates the graveness of the text. The accompaniment provides emphasis by utilizing pleasant, moving chords that cadence on an arpeggiated tonic chord in the final measure, stressing the statement's veracity. Here, on the poem's final line, Ives changed O'Shaughnessy's original "Have said, 'I love thee not'" to the present tense "Now Say, 'I love thee not.'" This is significant in light of the title Ives created for the song. In both cases, Ives's edits add a sense of temporality to the poem, revealing autumn as present tense and summer as past tense.

Taken alone, this song reveals little evidence that Ives had a special interest in the seasonal topic. When viewed with the rest of his seasonal songs, however, it clearly represents the beginning of what would become a theme in his music. At this point Ives had not developed the sense of idealism or the literary interests that would later influence his setting of seasonal

texts. Regardless, these early seasonal songs reflect an early engagement with the topic, and provide a good reference point when considering his later seasonal songs. And as his interests in literature and artistic expression began to grow, Ives would compose more seasonal songs whose focus would shift from romantic love to the seasons themselves.

There was another figure in Ives's life who had a significant impact on the impressionable young composer while at Yale. William Lyon Phelps, a literature professor, was a popular teacher with whom most of the students were familiar. Ives studied with Phelps in his freshman, sophomore, and senior years, more than any other professor besides Parker.<sup>22</sup> A writer and critic as well as a professor, Phelps published works include numerous essays and an autobiography. He most respected Robert Browning, whose poems he experienced "with the intensity of a conversion experience."<sup>23</sup> Ives later composed a *Browning Overture*, part of a planned but unfinished collection he called "overtures representing literary men" that also spawned the Second Piano Sonata, or *Concord Sonata*, and several songs.<sup>24</sup> This was due at least in part to Phelps's teaching and influence.

Feder credits Phelps with introducing Ives to a vast body of literature, specifically in a class titled "American Literature of the Past Hundred Years."<sup>25</sup> Phelps earned Ives's respect through his manner of teaching and by exposing him to this literature. In a letter written to Phelps later in life, Ives wrote, "You always looked as though you thought everybody knew just as much as you did. Emerson they say had the same way with him."<sup>26</sup> This comparison to Emerson is most likely the highest form of praise Ives could have given. Phelps influenced him immensely, and introduced him to material that would later shape his entire transcendental

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<sup>22</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 74.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>24</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 76.

<sup>25</sup> Feder, *Charles Ives: My Father's Song*, 142.

<sup>26</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 74.



philosophy. And although it would be his wife Harmony who would establish for him a strong habit of reading and a keen literary interest, Phelps helped plant the seeds of Ives's mature ideals and interests. For as Feder sums up, "In years to come, many of the poems Charlie set to music were those to which he had been introduced in Phelps's classes."<sup>27</sup>

One of the earliest manifestations of Ives's interest in literature was the essay he wrote during his senior year on Ralph Waldo Emerson. This essay, whose contents are unknown, was most likely written for one of Phelps's classes.<sup>28</sup> Ives must have taken particular pride in this essay, as he submitted it to the *Yale Literary Magazine*, after which it was "promptly handed back."<sup>29</sup> This essay serves as an early piece of evidence showing that Ives was quite interested in the subject of literature. At this point in his life, his literary activities consisted mainly of editing texts for his songs and writing essays, such as the one on Emerson, for his classes. These activities would of course reach their apex with his extensive *Essays Before a Sonata*, a book of essays meant to accompany the Second Piano Sonata in which he describes many of his artistic goals and ideas. Ives would also write several of his own song texts and numerous other documents and letters. The origin of Ives's literary interests has received much speculation, but it can be certain that Professor Phelps had an integral role in developing it, perhaps even cultivating the writing skills that would allow him to produce his future essays and song texts.

While Griggs, Phelps, Parker, and surely others played integral roles in Ives's development after his father's death, Ives's devotion began to turn towards another figure, Henry David Thoreau, to whom he would feel a connection for the remainder of his life. As he later wrote of him, "my Thoreau—that reassuring and true friend, who stood by me one 'low' day,

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<sup>27</sup> Feder, *Charles Ives: My Father's Song*, 142.

<sup>28</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 137. Burkholder suggests that Ives was too busy to write an essay outside of any class, and that Phelps's class was the only one for which the subject of the essay was suited.

<sup>29</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 83. In *The Ideas Behind the Music*, Burkholder suggests that Griggs could be responsible for Ives's submission to the magazine, as he served as its editor while at Yale.

when the sun had gone down, long, long before sunset.”<sup>30</sup> Burkholder points out that while Ives’s “passionate esteem” for the writer was to be developed in his years at Yale, and perhaps even more after his marriage in 1908, he did not hold this devotion from early in his life, as some have previously claimed.<sup>31</sup> As Feder suggests, perhaps the “low day” of his father’s death caused Ives’s view of Thoreau and literary transcendentalism to change from just a “casual interest.”<sup>32</sup> While the earlier seasonal songs appear absent of Thoreau’s transcendental influence, a greater respect for that literary tradition became more apparent through time.

The second seasonal song from this period, “In April-tide,” was most likely written ca. 1896–97, around the same time as “In Autumn.” The text is by American poet Clinton Scollard, born in 1860. It is from the collection *Hills of Songs*, published in 1895, and titled “Be Ye in Love with April-tide.” Ives most likely encountered the poem through its original publication due to the close proximity of the song’s composition and the poem’s publication. James Sinclair points out that the song may have been an assignment for one of Horatio Parker’s classes, so perhaps Ives was given the text by his teacher.<sup>33</sup>

Despite its title, Scollard’s “Be Ye in Love with April-tide” is as much a poem of romantic love as it is a love poem about spring:

Be ye in love with April-tide?  
I' faith, in love am I!  
For now't is sun, and now't is shower,  
And now't is frost, and now't is flower,  
And now't is Laura laughing-eyed,  
And now't is Laura shy.

Ye doubtful days, O slower glide!  
Still smile and frown, O sky!

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<sup>30</sup> Feder, *Charles Ives: my Father's Song*, 143.

<sup>31</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Feder, *Charles Ives: My Father's Song*, 143.

<sup>33</sup> Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*, 409. Sinclair does not speculate that the text was given to Ives by Parker.

Some beauty unforeseen I trace  
In every change of Laura's face;  
Be ye in love with April-tide?  
I' faith, in love am I!<sup>34</sup>

In the first line Scollard poses a question for his audience and subsequently answers it for himself in the next. It is revealed to the listener that the love that the poet proclaims in line 2 is not only for the joys and beauty of April-tide, but also a romantic love. He continues in the following two lines to describe the season and all that it brings, and then proceeds to describe “Laura laughing-eyed” in the final two lines of the stanza. The second stanza is similar: Scollard devotes significant attention to a description of the season as well as addressing his muse. In focusing a significant portion of the poem on romantic love, however, Scollard does not diminish the seasonal aspect of his poem—the two receive equal attention. The love described can even be viewed as an essential aspect of springtime. In this light the differences between the source text and Ives’s modified version of it become significant to its meaning, as there are several omissions in Ives’s adaptation.

Ives set four lines from each stanza: 1–3 and 6 of stanza 1 and 1–2 and 5–6 of stanza 2.

The poem as Ives set it reads:

Be ye in love with April-tide?  
I' faith, in love am I!  
For now 'tis sun, and now 'tis show'r,  
And now 'tis Laura shy,  
And now 'tis Laura shy.

Ye doubtful days, O slower glide!  
Still frown and smile, O Sky!  
Be ye in love with April-tide?  
I' faith, in love am I,  
I' faith in love am I!<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Clinton Scollard, *Hills of Song* (Boston: Copeland and Day, 1895), 85.

<sup>35</sup> Charles E. Ives, *Forty Earlier Songs*, 32–33.

His initial two-line omission includes both a line describing the physical nature of the spring and the initial description of “Laura.” In the second stanza Ives omits all references to “Laura,” greatly diminishing the role of romantic love in the poem. The end result is that “Laura” and romantic love become merely characteristics of springtime and lose their role as an equal subject in the poem. As in the previous song, here Ives is placing more emphasis on the seasonal aspect of a text than did the original author. This result could perhaps be coincidence, but the fact that Ives repeatedly made similar changes in other seasonal poems points to an underlying interest in the seasons and a desire to express them musically. This desire must have been strong, as it seems unusual that the college-aged Ives would have taken more interest in a seasonal topic than one of romantic love.

The style of Ives’s musical setting reflects that of the text. The song begins with a flourished arpeggio of the tonic E  $\flat$  chord, and once again, as in “In Autumn,” Ives sets the text strophically. The melody is simple and diatonic, while at times proceeding chromatically through the tightly fitting seventh-chord harmonies. With its strophic structure, frequent dramatic fermatas, and shifting dynamics this song fits into the Romantic style that Horatio Parker would have expected from his students.

“In April-tide” is easily grouped with “In Autumn” within the context of Ives’s seasonal songs. The music, text, subject, and titles of each are at least somewhat similar. They both use the seasonal topic to create a specific tone for the poem. The descriptions of summer and autumn they contain paint a bright picture in the listeners’ mind. The final song from this period is similar as well, as it makes the same use of the seasonal topic, but in a slightly different way. “The Ending Year,” composed in 1902, was written at the end of this period in his life and although it belongs in the same category as the previous two songs, “The Ending Year”

demonstrates Ives's growth as a composer foreshadows the types of songs he would come to compose.

The poem used for the text was "In Autumn" by Arthur Symons, which oddly enough uses the same title as Ives's 1896 song "In Autumn." Symons's poem was first published in his collection *Silhouettes* in 1892. The author of this text has also not been previously identified.<sup>36</sup> Symons was a British poet, born to Scottish parents in Wales in 1865, nine years before Ives's birth.<sup>37</sup> Symons, who was also a playwright and prominent critic, is generally considered a decadent poet. *Silhouettes*, Symons's second volume of verse, is a collection of short poems that deal with a limited range of subjects; John N. Munro described these poems as "polished, sophisticated little verses...which nevertheless impress the reader with their deftness and artistry."<sup>38</sup> "In Autumn" is a brief, three-stanza poem. The text reads:

Frail autumn lights upon the leaves  
    Beacon the ending of the year.  
    The windy rains are here,  
Wet nights and blowing winds about the eaves.

Here in the valley, mists begin  
    To breathe about the river side  
    The breath of autumn-tide.  
The dark fields wait to take the harvest in.

And you, and you are far away.  
    Ah, this it is, and not the rain  
    Now loud against the pane,  
That takes the light and colour from the day!<sup>39</sup>

The text of this poem is in some ways similar to the other seasonal texts Ives used in this period. It, like the two previously discussed poems, taps into the affective power of the yearly seasons in

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<sup>36</sup> Symons is not identified as the author of the text in Charles E. Ives, *Forty Earlier Songs*, 69 or Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*, 243.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Beckson, *Arthur Symons: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 6.

<sup>38</sup> John N. Munro, *Arthur Symons* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), 29.

<sup>39</sup> Arthur Symons, *Silhouettes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: Leonard Smithers, 1896), 88.

order to articulate themes concerned primarily with romantic love. Symons here describes the gloomy autumn weather, but reveals that it is the absence of his love that “takes the light and colour from the day.” Like O’Shaughnessy’s poem, this text deals with the hardships of romantic love, but its tone is even bleaker in comparison. “In Autumn” strikes a negative mood with regards to romantic love, but the descriptions of the seasons serve as a contrasting element, allowing the poem to have a positive mood in spite of its negative content. This contrast illuminates a theme of perception versus reality in the poem, apparent in O’Shaughnessy’s use of the verbs “seemed” and “proved false.” Symons utilizes seasonal descriptions to create a mood for his text, although there is no contrast between mood and content, as his description of the dismal autumn weather symbolizes the negative emotions resulting from his absent love.

In his setting, Ives attempted to capture the tone of Symons’s poem. Conversely, with O’Shaughnessy’s text for “In Autumn,” Ives created a contrast between musical mood and poetic content with his light, strophic setting and pleasant melody. For “The Ending Year,” Ives also stays true to the poet’s original tone, reflecting the meaning of the text. The piece begins with the piano, and from the outset it avoids establishing a strong tonal center, shifting between chords based on A and B<sup>b</sup>. On top of the shifting harmonies, the opening measures are riddled with unresolved suspensions and tritones accentuated on downbeats, giving the piece a drifting, wayward tone. Beginning in m. 5 the vocal melody consists of alternating quarter note and dotted-eighth and sixteenth-note figures, which begin on E4 and ascend up an octave in mostly stepwise motion. As the melody progresses it begins to cadence toward A minor starting in m. 8, but instead settles on an A dominant seventh chord in m.10. After more harmonic meandering, the song eventually settles on A major, where it remains for several measures. Here the melodic motion comes to a halt, while the singer recites the text on the repeating pitch E. The song

continues to progress through shifting modulations with a chromatic melody, until m. 25, when the melody begins its climax. This section modulates to D  $\flat$  major in m. 26 and finally returns to the original E minor in m. 28, with a chromatic melody that corresponds with the words “And you, and you are far away. Ah, this it is.” The melodic climax on these words, the highpoint of the text itself, highlights the meaning of the poem. Here, when the theme of absent love becomes present in the text, Ives created a sense of harmonic and melodic turmoil that clearly presents the content of the text. In the closing measures, the piece returns to the somber, slow mood of the opening measures to the words “That takes the light from the day.”

The text of “The Ending Year” underwent the most editing of the seasonal songs of this period. Ives replaced the words “Wet nights” in last line of the first stanza with his own line, “bleak nights are here.” Repeated in alternation with “blowing winds are here,” this line adds to the sense of instability provided by the shifting accompaniment. He also omitted lines from the final stanza, presumably to better fit the text to the music. Unlike “In Autumn” and “In April-tide,” however; Ives’s edits do not significantly alter or refocus the meaning of the poem.

### **“AMBIGUOUS” DIRECTIONS**

Ives finished “The Ending Year” in 1902. Living in a New York tenement popular with unmarried Yale graduates, Ives was well into his business career in life insurance. In June of that same year, following the failure of his cantata *The Celestial Country*, Ives played his last service at Central Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, effectively ending his musical career. After fourteen years of service as a church organist, he gave up his hope of following in the footsteps of his teacher Horatio Parker or those of the well-known church organist and composer Dudley

Buck, whom he admired.<sup>40</sup> He continued to compose, but his musical direction became “temporarily ambiguous.”<sup>41</sup>

“The Ending Year” demonstrates Ives’s uncertainty during this time. The serious and melancholic character of the text marks a departure from his previous seasonal songs, although the text remains similar to the previous two songs thematically. Before Ives’s editing, all three poems were at least equally focused on romantic love as they were on the seasons themselves, with “The Ending Year” giving the most focus to the seasonal element. Ives was seemingly drifting away from the types of light, collegiate pieces he wrote while at Yale in an undefined direction. As he watched his friends and roommates begin high-paying professional careers and settle down into marriage, the twenty-seven year old Ives undoubtedly felt an intense pressure to mature. This shows through in “The Ending Year,” with its adventurous harmonic movement, frequent and accentuated dissonances, and somber tone. This song perfectly played a transitional role, for in it Ives explored ideas that would come to full fruition in his mature style. He would come to choose, as will be shown, texts that address the seasons not as adjuncts to another theme, but as subject matter in their own right. And even though it is very difficult to establish a stylistic timeline of Ives’s musical development, as he composed in different styles simultaneously throughout his career and made many revisions to his works in his later years, “The Ending Year” shows a depth of character and true sense of understanding the text that were not as apparent in the two previous seasonal songs.<sup>42</sup>

In these years of Ives’s early adulthood, his attraction to song texts concerning the yearly seasons may seem inconsequential if taken alone. He wrote only a few seasonal songs at this

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<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of Dudley Buck and his influence on Ives’s early musical career, see: Magee, *Charles Ives Reconsidered*, 23–28.

<sup>41</sup> Magee, *Charles Ives Reconsidered*, 67.

<sup>42</sup> On the difficulty of establishing a definitive chronology for Ives, see J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made Of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 9.



point in his career, and the songs avoid treating the seasons directly as a subject. They are extremely important, however, to the larger group of seasonal songs as a whole. First, they give a point of reference with which to compare the later seasonal songs, providing an important glimpse into the development of Ives's style and, moreover, the development of his philosophical principles and personal tastes. Second, they provide insight into this period of Ives's life, for which there is scarce textual documentation. Finally, they show early traces of elements that would become important parts of Ives's mature style, as well as elements that would come to characterize his seasonal songs.

### CHAPTER 3: COURTSHIP SONGS: 1902–1908

In June of 1898, Charles Ives graduated from Yale and moved to Manhattan, where he began working for Mutual Life Insurance. This entry level position was secured for him by a well-placed family member, his father's second cousin, Granville White.<sup>1</sup> Shortly afterwards, in September of the same year, he moved with other Yale graduates into a communal apartment known as "Poverty Flat," and although its location would change twice and its residents even more frequently, Ives remained a tenant of "Poverty Flat" for ten years, until his marriage in 1908.<sup>2</sup> Upon his move to Manhattan, Ives began working as organist and choir director at Bloomfield Presbyterian Church in New Jersey, a position possibly obtained prior to his graduation.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1898 and 1902, Ives's compositions still show the heavy influence of his Yale education under Horatio Parker. These include most of the *Second Symphony*, some of a concerto for violin and piano, and several art songs, some of them with texts in German and French. Included in this group is "The Ending Year," discussed in the previous chapter. Ives also wrote practical pieces for use in the churches in which he served. These pieces were composed mainly for organ or choir. One of the most significant pieces of this period was his cantata *The Celestial Country*, modeled after Parker's highly successful oratorio *Hora novissima*, composed in 1893. The piece was premiered at Central Presbyterian Church in 1902, where Ives was serving as organist since 1900. As Jan Swafford puts it, Ives "pulled out all the stops for the Central

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<sup>1</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 76.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America* (New York: Liveright, 1975), 87.

<sup>3</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 78.

Presbyterian premiere of *The Celestial Country*,” as it was scored for two solo quartets and choir, string quartet, brass, timpani, and organ.<sup>4</sup> After the premiere, reviews of *The Celestial Country* appeared in prestigious publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Musical Courier*. The reviews were “pleasant but patronizing,” and the piece “failed to secure for Ives either publication or a position as a teacher or composer.”<sup>5</sup> Just a short time later, on June 1, 1902, Ives played his last service at Central Presbyterian Church, ending his career in music. This important event marks the end of the period labeled by Burkholder as “Years of Apprenticeship.”

Not only did 1902 mark the end of Ives’s career as a church musician and a composer, it began a new, important period in his life during which he would begin to develop his mature style of composition, as well as reach new levels of success in his insurance career. Referring to the events of 1902, including his resignation from Central Presbyterian Church and the premiere of *The Celestial Country*, Burkholder states, “his failure ultimately led to a radical change in the purpose and style of his music.”<sup>6</sup> This is true, for when Ives left a vocation in which music served a utilitarian purpose, he stopped composing such pieces and turned to other forms of composition.

Burkholder labels the period of Ives’s life from 1902–1908 as years of “Innovation and Synthesis.”<sup>7</sup> They begin with Ives’s resignation from Central Presbyterian Church and end with his marriage to Harmony Twichell. For further clarification in this study, however, it is better to divide this period into two, the first being 1902–1906, and the second 1906–1908. The first

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<sup>4</sup> Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life With Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 159–160.

<sup>5</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 81.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 43–44.

period is truly one of innovation and synthesis. In the second period he continued to create radical new music but returned to a more conservative style in some of his pieces. In fact, he later referred to this period as “a kind of slump,” when the opinions of others caused him to revert to this style, which he considered backwards.<sup>8</sup>

The period of 1902–1906 is generally known as the beginning of Ives’s isolation as a composer. Prior to this point his compositions had a secure audience in his congregations and his classmates at Yale. After 1902, the only people who regularly heard his compositions were his roommates in Poverty Flat, who called his composing “residential disturbances.”<sup>9</sup> Ives was also able to secure ad hoc groups of theater orchestra players or friends to sometimes play through his works, but most of these semi-performances were not met with positive reviews. The nature of his compositions had changed from the organ pieces with experimental color he played for his polite congregations to much more difficult and radical pieces for which many lacked the patience.

Evident in these pieces is the dualistic approach to music that Ives began to take. According to Burkholder, this stems from “Danbury’s splintered musical life and the dichotomy between George Ives and Horatio Parker.”<sup>10</sup> From his father, Ives inherited an “ideal open-mindedness” that resulted in his experimental pieces, and from Parker a “typically Romantic high-mindedness” that resulted in his use of classical forms and techniques.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Ives’s music from this period demonstrates this duality in innovative pieces such as *Central Park in the Dark* (1906), *Country Band March* (1903), and *Ragtime Pieces* (1902–1904). As Burkholder

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<sup>8</sup> Charles E. Ives, *Memos*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 129.

<sup>9</sup> Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America*, 148.

<sup>10</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 83.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

notes, these “are no longer simply vernacular pieces but are concert pieces that are ‘about’ vernacular styles,” which also employ experimental and original techniques, such as the use of previously composed music, written out “mistakes,” and polytonality.<sup>12</sup> Feder refers to much of this music as “autobiographical music” and Burkholder adapts Peter Rabinowitz’s term “fictional music.”<sup>13</sup> These types of pieces, many of which he would later revise and recast into new works, are what characterize Ives’s output from 1902–1906.

Ives would compose very few songs during these years. Instead, his efforts were devoted mainly to developing new ideas and techniques in new musical genres. Perhaps the reason was Ives’s recent shift in roles from public to private composer. As he expressed in his *Memos*, “I seemed to have worked with more natural freedom, when I knew that the music was not going to be played before the public.”<sup>14</sup> This new “natural freedom” seems to have pulled Ives away from song composition toward instrumental genres that were more abstract in nature. Despite the freedom Ives experienced with private musical composition, he made several attempts to have his new works performed, attempts that were almost entirely unsuccessful. It would not be until he began collaborating with his future wife that he would return to song composition, but interestingly enough in a way that would contrast with his musical development up to that time. Thus the years of 1906–1908 have been separated from Burkholder’s larger frame of 1902–1908 (“Innovation and Synthesis”) for the purposes of this study. These were the courtship years, in

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<sup>12</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 85.

<sup>13</sup> Stuart Feder, *Charles Ives “My Father’s Song”: A Psychoanalytic Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 175 and Peter J. Rabinowitz, “Fictional Music: Toward a Theory of Listening,” In Harry R. Gavin, ed., *Theories of Reading, looking, and Listening*. Bucknell Review 26, no.1 (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1981), 193–208, cited in Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 84.

<sup>14</sup> Ives, *Memos*, 128.

which Ives would resume song composition to a greater degree. This period included a return to the seasonal topic, albeit in a new manner.

### **CHARLES AND HARMONY**

Charles Ives and Harmony Twichell began their formal courtship sometime in the summer of 1906. Her first letter to him, dated August 16, 1906, was “polite, [and] guarded,” and followed a summer of visits and friendship.<sup>15</sup> They had known each other for quite some time, however: Ives attended Yale with her brother David Twichell, who became his roommate in Poverty Flat. In 1896 Ives spent his summer vacation with the Twichells in the Adirondacks, where he would have come to know Harmony well. They also attended the junior promenade together at Yale in 1896, but nothing seemed to come of it. It would not be until much later, in 1905 or 1906, that they would begin to take interest in each other, a path that would eventually lead them, though rather slowly, to marriage in 1908.

As Harmony later remembered of their courtship, “we were very formal in those days.”<sup>16</sup> This is true, as Ives’s shyness and strict Victorian manners prevented him from openly expressing his feelings for her for quite some time. The two did, however, draw closer through frequent visits and letters through the course of 1906 and 1907, when Charles was living in New York and Harmony in Hartford. This courtship would not only culminate in their marriage in 1908, but more immediately begin an artistic collaboration that produced several songs with texts by Harmony and music by Ives. Through their letters they would exchange text and music, with

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<sup>15</sup> Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life With Music*, 182.

<sup>16</sup> Feder, *Charles Ives: My Father’s Song*, 204.

Ives editing Harmony's words to make them more suited for musical setting, a role at which he was quite adept.

Their first collaboration took place sometime in 1906, and resulted in the song "The World's Highway."<sup>17</sup> Harmony sent Ives her poem in a letter, and he subsequently adapted it to music he had already composed. According to Jan Swafford, Harmony only sent the poem to Ives with some "trepidation."<sup>18</sup> In any case, this fear seems to have been relinquished, as they would work together on eight songs in total throughout his career. Their courtship produced three of these songs along with unrealized plans for an opera with a libretto by Harmony and music by Ives. These three courtship songs have much in common surrounding the circumstances of their composition. The music and text were both conventional for their time. Ives used music he composed at an earlier time for all three songs and all of Harmony's poems contain similar themes. And as will be shown, Charles and Harmony's discussions of each song are well documented in their correspondence, which includes specific details regarding the text.

"Spring Song" is the second song to result from Charles and Harmony's collaborations, and the first with a seasonal topic. The text was sent to Ives in a letter of on August 14, 1907, while Harmony was on vacation with her family at Lake Saranac in the Adirondacks.<sup>19</sup> The text describes late spring as an entity that comes and calls away all the things of the previous winter season:

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<sup>17</sup> Feder, *Charles Ives: My Father's Song*, 204.

<sup>18</sup> Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life With Music*, 182.

<sup>19</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, "'A Grand and Glorious Noise!': Charles Ives as Lyricist," *American Music* 15, no.1 (Spring 1997), 14.

Across the hill, of late, came Spring  
And Stopped and looked into this wood,  
and called and called and called.  
Now all the dry brown things are answ'ring,  
With here a leaf and there a fair blown flow'r.  
I only heard her not,  
And wait, and wait.<sup>20</sup>

This poem, as H. Wiley Hitchcock puts it, is “genteel, proper, and hardly noteworthy.”<sup>21</sup> Its unrhymed lines of varying lengths do in fact seem to be missing a certain depth of character that was present in the texts of Ives’s earlier songs on seasonal themes. It does, however, bring a new element of expression to Ives’s seasonal songs, for this is the first instance of several where Ives uses a text that personifies a season and its natural elements. By bringing spring to life, Harmony and Charles are utilizing a common literary device; they are giving the season a character and personality, and making it the focal point of the poem. Until this point, Ives’s seasonal song texts had focused (at least before Ives’s editing) on romantic love, using the seasons as a literary element to set a certain tone or to help describe romantic feelings. This changes with Harmony’s text; it excludes any elements of romantic love and makes Spring itself the subject of her poem.

Not only did Harmony decide to make Spring the subject of her text, but she decided on a specific personality for it. As Hitchcock explains, Harmony and Charles came to “ultimate agreement” through correspondence that “‘spring’ is female and must be referred to, in the last line, not as ‘it’ but ‘her.’”<sup>22</sup> This draws upon the classical associations of spring to birth and fertility. As described, spring enters at the implied close of winter and begins to call the landscape back to life. The “dry brown things,” a description used to evoke the aftermath of

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<sup>20</sup> Hitchcock, “‘A Grand and Glorious Noise!’: Charles Ives as Lyricist,” 37–38.

<sup>21</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, ed., *Charles Ives: 129 Songs*, vol. 47 of *Recent Researches in American Music* (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2004), li.

<sup>22</sup> Hitchcock, “‘A Grand and Glorious Noise!’: Charles Ives as Lyricist,” 13.



winter, begin to answer her call. After another line full of descriptive seasonal words, the text turns from what Harmony called “the happiness of the things that had heard the spring” to the more melancholy “longing expectancy of that which hadn’t.”<sup>23</sup> These comments help to clarify the meaning of the poem for the audience. As the last two lines unfold, the speaker is revealed to be an element of nature, one of the “dry brown things” that misses the rejuvenating call of spring. Thus “I” in the last line is not Harmony, but another personified element of nature, which not merely speaks to the listener but conveys emotions, specifically one of “longing expectancy.” The poem thus ends without closure, as the personified element of nature patiently waits for the life bringing warmth of spring, not to be satisfied within the confines of the text.

Harmony’s text for “Spring Song” may be stylistically similar to that of the previous seasonal songs, but it differs markedly from them in several aspects, most of all the extent to which it engages the seasons as a topic. Most of the seasonal songs of the previous chapter contained evocative images depicting the described season. “The Ending Year” contained the most images, as the focus of the text was on autumn and its elements until the last several lines. “Spring Song” puts at least equal emphasis on the seasonal topic, beginning with the simple yet straightforward title that alludes to its subject, but unlike “In April-tide” and “In Autumn,” “Spring Song” stays true to its title and takes spring as its subject. Harmony uses descriptive words such as “dry,” “brown,” “leaf,” and “blown flow’r” throughout her text to describe the winter season. The season, furthermore, is cast as an agent of change, calling a dead world to life. The author lingers on this action in the third line, repeating “and called,” which emphasizes her role and actions. Spring then gives life to the earth, with “all the dry brown things”

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<sup>23</sup> Hitchcock, ““A Grand and Glorious Noise!”: Charles Ives as Lyricist,” 13.

responding to her call. This culminates in the final two lines, where one of these elements, having revealed its feeling to us, is left to “wait, and wait.”

As with all three of the courtship songs, Ives set Harmony’s poem to music he had composed years earlier. The music for “Spring Song” comes from the now lost song “Ariel’s Departure,” composed around 1903, with text from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.<sup>24</sup> It is fairly conventional in most aspects, and contains none of the dissonances or techniques that can be found in other music of this period. Instead, it contains thick seventh-chord harmonies in the accompaniment, which supports the somewhat chromatic movement of the melody. Ives’s frequent use of suspensions, non-chord tones, and thick passing harmonies give “Spring Song” a somewhat decadent feel.

“Spring Song” is made up of two main sections which mirror the two sections of Harmony’s poem. The first section opens in m. 4 after a short introduction with a strong statement of the tonic in the given key of F major, played in eighth-note triads in the right hand on the piano. The vocal melody then enters at the close of this measure in a chromatically descending fashion. From this point the song progresses quickly, with the syllabic setting of the text moving the verse along rapidly through the next several measures, until m. 8, when the harmonic motion abruptly ends with the vocal line on the supertonic harmony G minor to the words “and called.” These two words are then repeated twice into m. 9, with an ascending then descending minor third in the melody. The weak progression of the harmony from ii in m. 8 to IV in m. 9 interestingly highlights Harmony’s text. The lack of resolution to the dominant creates

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<sup>24</sup> James B. Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 511.

a sense of incompleteness, which foreshadows the “longing expectancy” of the following lines. When the vocal line finally descends to scale degree 5 in m. 10, it functions as the fifth of the tonic rather than the root of the dominant.

When the melody resumes in m. 12, it maintains the fast, syllabic pace of the beginning, but is melodically and rhythmically different. The fast dotted rhythms seem to illustrate the excited “answ’ring” of the “dry brown things.” This continues until the song climaxes in m. 17, to the words “I only heard her not.” Here the melody reaches its highest pitch on G5, the tempo slows, and the chordal accompaniment thickens. This is the poetic climax of the song as well as the musical one. The speaker expresses having missed spring’s call in a burst of emotion that unexpectedly rises from the pleasant descriptions of the preceding text. In the final measures, the song calms as the melody returns to a similar gesture used in mm. 8–10, as the words “and wait” are repeated on scale degree 5, a substitution for “and called” from the first stanza. This is significant, as the dominant harmony of mm. 19 and 20 does not resolve to the tonic F major in the final measure but rather to the subdominant B<sup>b</sup>. Just as spring never arrives for the “dry brown things” in the text, the expected tonal closure never arrives musically.

Although Ives set Harmony’s text to music he had previously composed, his setting still captures and highlights the meaning of the poem, demonstrating his poetic sensibilities. This is illustrated in the same letter from Harmony to Ives mentioned above. This letter reveals that Ives pointed out the climax of the text to Harmony and that she intended for there to be contrast between the two sections of the verse, both of which Ives successfully created in his setting: “I think you are right about the climax of that verse being in the last line—it is[...]& I still think the verse would be better with another line that would contrast more strongly the happiness of the

things that had heard the spring & the longing expectancy of that which hadn't."<sup>25</sup> That Ives was quite adept at repurposing music he had already written is demonstrated not only here, but within his entire compositional output. Material from many of the pieces he wrote while at Yale and for use during his church services would later find its way into his mature pieces, material from instrumental works would be arranged into song settings, and there are several songs that exist in different versions with different texts from different points in his career.

Charles and Harmony's courtship intensified shortly after the composition of "Spring Song" in the fall of 1907. On October 22 of that year, while Ives was visiting the Twichell home in Hartford, he and Harmony took an afternoon walk on "the wood road to Farmington."<sup>26</sup> On this fateful walk, Ives finally confessed his love to Harmony and most likely proposed marriage. They would go on to cherish this event for the remainder of their lives. Harmony would recall the event in a letter to Ives months later, "I have thought very much today of that hour there and it seems like Paradise.—How beautiful everything was and when you said to me what you did it seemed to me I was swept into a flood and I can't remember much else."<sup>27</sup> Inspired, Harmony attempted to put into words the emotions and experiences of that day, and choose as her medium a poem once again thematically related to seasonal change.

For this new collaboration, Harmony drew on words she had previously written to Ives in a letter. On October 17, just days before their walk and their engagement, Harmony wrote to Charles, "These days are so heavenly—I've always called this time of year the peace of God, to myself—the earth has done her year's work and seems to be resting and these days seem to be a

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<sup>25</sup> Hitchcock, "'A Grand and Glorious Noise!': Charles Ives as Lyricist," 13.

<sup>26</sup> Feder, *Charles Ives: My Father's Song*, 206.

<sup>27</sup> Tom Owens, ed., "Selected Correspondence 1881–1954," In *Charles Ives and His World*, ed. J. Peter Burkholder (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 211.

smile of approval.”<sup>28</sup> True to form, Ives helped to edit and arrange Harmony’s words. The final form of the text as it appears in *114 Songs* is as follows:

Earth rests! Her work is done,  
Her fields lie bare.  
And ere the night of winter comes  
To hush her song and close her tired eyes,  
She turns her face for the sun to smile upon  
And radiantly, thro’ Fall’s bright glow, he smiles,  
And brings the Peace of God!<sup>29</sup>

In her poem, Harmony was attempting to capture her view of autumn as a peaceful and restful time of year, and by doing so she cast light on the events that were taking place in her and Ives’s life at that time.

On the surface, this poem is meant to capture the atmosphere of their October walk through the New England countryside. She wrote to Ives with her initial draft of the poem, “Do you think it seems like last Tuesday at all—from the cliff?”<sup>30</sup> In trying to capture this atmosphere, Harmony puts emphasis on the seasonal topic not only for descriptive purposes but also to drive the narrative. On this first level, she describes the late fall, after the harvest when the ground is barren. This all appears in the first two lines and helps establish the tone of the poem, which is not somber even though it evokes the coming winter. In all of the previous seasonal songs, autumn and winter were assigned a more negative quality than spring or summer. In Harmony’s text here, however, autumn is celebrated. The first words, “Earth rests!” immediately suggest a peacefulness that is continued throughout the rest of the poem.

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<sup>28</sup> Hitchcock, ““A Grand and Glorious Noise!”: Charles Ives as Lyricist,” 13.

<sup>29</sup> Hitchcock, ed., *Charles Ives: 129 Songs*, 171–172.

<sup>30</sup> Owens, ed., “Selected Correspondence 1881–1954,” 206.

On a secondary level, Harmony's text personalizes the seasons by personifying the natural elements of the poem (the sun and the earth) and giving them feelings and emotions, just as she did in "Spring Song." As Earth, gendered as female, enters into a state of rest, she seeks the comfort of the male sun, who "smiles" his warmth upon her, and brings her peace. As before, Harmony personifies the natural elements of the poem and gives them emotions, which are perhaps her own. The "Peace of God" brought to Earth by the sun could be an expression of her own feelings, which she projects onto the earth as a whole. Jan Swafford offers another interpretation, in which the sun and the earth are an analogy for Harmony and Charles, and the earth and Harmony are "redeemed from loneliness and labor and encroaching age."<sup>31</sup>

In his setting of the poem, titled simply "Autumn," Ives once again highlights the main features of Harmony's text extremely well, a result of his direct influence of its final form. As with the other courtship songs, Ives set Harmony's text to music he had previously composed. The music came from another song, also titled "Autumn," with a different, unknown text. According to Ives, the earlier song was sung by Dr. Griggs at a Thanksgiving service in 1902.<sup>32</sup> No copies of this piece exist, nor is there any indication of exactly when the music was composed.

The music begins with a long piano introduction, with the first words of the melody appearing midway through, somewhat cutoff from the rest of the text. The accompaniment consists of syncopated quarter note triads in the left hand and a simple melody in the right hand. The introduction is marked *adagio* and *piano* and creates a sense of subdued intensity. This

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<sup>31</sup> Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music*, 186.

<sup>32</sup> Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*, 218.

texture continues for the first half of the song, with the vocal melody making its main entrance in m. 6 at the same tempo and dynamic markings until m. 13 with the first reference to the sun in the text. Here an ascending line in the melody is marked by a crescendo and a slight increase in tempo, building tension further. In m. 14, however, the tension completely disappears with a harmonic move from the subdominant G<sup>b</sup> major chord in m. 13 to a C<sup>b</sup> major chord on the downbeat of m. 14, briefly tonicizing the subtonic. This surprising progression removes all the tension that was mounting up to this point. The piece continues to increase in tempo and dynamics. In m. 16 the accompaniment picks up with eighth-note triplets and the melody ascends to its climax in the following measure. To the words “he smiles” the piece reaches its loudest dynamic and the furthest reach of its ambitus while the accompaniment highlights the word “smiles” with a large rolled chord, emphasizing this joyful moment in the text. The piece then immediately returns to the adagio tempo and soft dynamics of its beginning to the final words “And brings the Peace of God.” In this climax Ives is able to simultaneously highlight the jubilation expressed in the text and the lasting peace that the autumn season brings to the earth.

Charles and Harmony were finally married on June 9, 1908. This date would later be used by scholars to mark the beginning of Ives’s mature period, for his mindset and his actions changed with marriage, which consequently had an effect on his compositions. Ives left the bachelor life completely behind, withdrawing from his friends and opting to spend his free time reading and composing. During their courtship Harmony had envisioned their marriage this way, with a strong emphasis on spending time reading literature together, a habit that she had long enjoyed. She wrote to Ives in February of 1908, “I’ve been thinking of ways and longing to make

and keep my heart and life what our love would have it. For one thing, we must plan to have times for leisure of thought and we must try and read a lot, the best books”<sup>33</sup> By establishing for them the habit of investing time in great literature, Harmony would help Ives deepen his literary interest, which would in turn help deepen his interest in transcendental philosophy.

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<sup>33</sup> Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music*, 191.



## CHAPTER 4: MATURITY: 1908–1923

### MARRIAGE, BUSINESS, AND MATURITY

1908 marked for Ives the transition from life as a bachelor and entry level insurance clerk to a married, respectable, and well-off New York businessman. His new insurance company, cofounded in 1907 with Julian Myrick, would bring him considerable wealth in the years to come. Ives was drawn away from his bachelor friends of poverty flat, choosing to spend much of his leisure time fulfilling Harmony's premarital plans for routine reading. Then, in 1912, the couple changed their primary residence from New York City to Redding, Connecticut, where they had purchased a home. Throughout all of this, Ives remained an active composer, using his daily train commute from Redding to New York and evenings at home to work on his pieces.

Ives's musical style changed during this time. He attempted to express his emotional associations with personal experiences in his pieces, which were usually related to specific places or events.<sup>1</sup> This feature is present in all three movements of his *Orchestral Set No. 1: Three Places in New England*. In the third movement, titled *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*, Ives tried to recreate the experience of a country walk he shared with Harmony not long after their marriage. This piece not only evokes the physical elements of their walk, such as “the murmuring water and the trees, [and] the hymn drifting through them,” but the emotional elements related to the event, such as “the revelation of human and divine love penetrating all of it.”<sup>2</sup> Alongside this, Ives began to make references to the past, both in general and specific terms, and to display elements of Americanism in his music, which celebrates “the life, music, literature, and history of the United States, particularly of New England.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 97.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 193.

<sup>3</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 98–102.

In the mid-1920s, however, Ives stopped composing new music and instead focused on revising and changing his pieces or preparing them for publication. Thus, Burkholder labels the years 1908–1917 as Ives’s “Years of Maturity.”<sup>4</sup> This exact chronological division, however, is not so much useful in the consideration of the seasonal songs, as the two considered in this chapter were composed after 1917. Burkholder uses 1917 as the end of this period because of Ives’s diminished output in the following years as well as his abandoning of larger forms. He did, however, continue to write songs and piano pieces, as well as prepare pieces for his two major publications. The use of Burkholder’s label “maturity” does not refer to a strict time period, then, but rather to the style and content of the pieces that Ives composed during this time. “Maturity,” as it relates to this group of songs, can also be used to define the ideas conveyed by his music. It should be noted that Ives’s output from this period is quite diverse, and it is difficult to pinpoint an exact style or set of techniques that makes his music “mature.”

Between 1908 and 1920, Ives did not make use of seasonal topics to a great extent. There were, however, songs with brief mentions of the seasons in either their titles or their texts. “August,” “September,” and “December,” all with texts by Dante Gabriel Rossetti from a collection of fourteenth century Italian poetry, seem to hint at the seasons through their titles, but their texts make little or no mention of the seasons or their elements. “Walking,” composed c. 1912 with a text by Ives himself, seems to evoke autumn in the lines “A big October morning” and “with autumn colors glow.” These lines, however, serve only to add a backdrop to Ives’s “walk,” and he attempted in no other way to evoke autumn in its text or to express it musically. These songs only briefly mention the seasons, and the music in no way reflects this usage. Therefore they should not be included in the group of seasonal songs addressed in this study. Alternatively, the two songs from this period that do fall into the category of seasonal songs

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<sup>4</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 44.

make no explicit mention to the seasons, yet thoroughly express the seasonal topic both in their music and text.

### **“MAPLE LEAVES” AND “YELLOW LEAVES”**

The first seasonal song composed by Ives during this period was “Maple Leaves,” in 1920. For the text, Ives set a poem by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, an American poet born in 1836. Aldrich was considered a literary conservative who “seldom attempted to reform his readers [or] his age” but whose goal was “to give pleasure by pointing out unnoticed beauty.”<sup>5</sup> An unnamed contemporary, in the preface to Aldrich’s published poetic works, found him to be “thoroughly of New England.”<sup>6</sup> He was very well known during his life and was “considered the equal of William Dean Howells and Samuel Clemens as a man of letters; and he was ranked favorably, especially as a poet.”<sup>7</sup> After his death, however, he faded from the public eye and was mostly forgotten.

The poem Ives set was first published in 1882 in a book of quatrains, but according to H. Wiley Hitchcock, Ives most likely encountered it in a collection titled “Golden Numbers: A Book of Verse for Youth,” published in 1916.<sup>8</sup> A short pictorial poem titled “Maple Leaves,” it describes the colorful leaves of autumn:

October turned my maple’s leaves to gold;  
The most are gone now; here and there one lingers:  
Soon these will slip from out the twigs’ weak hold,  
Like coins between a dying miser’s fingers.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Charles E. Samuels, *Thomas Bailey Aldrich* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1966), 15.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Bailey Aldrich, *The Poems of Thomas Bailey Aldrich* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 1: xx.

<sup>7</sup> Samuels, *Thomas Bailey Aldrich*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, “Ives as Songwriter and Lyricist” in *Charles Ives: 129 Songs* (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2004), lxix; Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora Archibald Smith, eds., *Golden Numbers: A Book of Verse for Youth* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1916), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Aldrich, *The Poems of Thomas Bailey Aldrich*, 1: 195

The poem is Aldrich's depiction of fall's changing leaves, which he describes using a clever simile in the final line. The brief text is a personal, realistic account of a small piece of the autumn landscape. It is filled with words and objects that evoke autumn although there is no direct mention of autumn itself, aside from the poem's October setting. Hitchcock even describes the text as "literally autumnal," and notes that it reflects "what [he] would term the 'autumnal' psychological state that Ives seems to have experienced during the years following his drastic breakdown in 1918."<sup>10</sup>

Ives's setting of Aldrich's poem mirrors the text in both its brevity and its character. Consisting of only eleven measures, the song presents Aldrich's text exactly as it was first published, with no changes or repetitions of text segments. The vocal melody reflects the text's simplicity, lacking any wide leaps in range and featuring a simple rhythm with frequent dotted figures and syncopation. The song opens with the vocal melody and the accompaniment strongly suggesting G major, a key that completely disintegrates by m. 3. At this point the accompaniment changes from simple broken chords to dense, rolled, syncopated cluster chords. The first phrase of the vocal melody ends in this measure on a sustained D sharp to the word "gold," highlighting its importance. As suggested by Ruth Friedberg, this dramatic "turn" from a tonal center to complete atonality and chromaticism is a musical depiction of the changing of the leaves from their original color to the color of the fall.<sup>11</sup> Larry Starr points out that from this point on, the music becomes increasingly complex "as the leaves described in the song first turn

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<sup>10</sup> Hitchcock, "Ives as Songwriter and Lyricist," lxix. Ives experienced health problems throughout his life, the exact nature of which are debated. See: Stuart Feder, "Heard Maladies Are Sweet ('But Those Unheard Are Sweeter'): A Response to Gayle Sherwood," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54, no. 3 (Fall 2001), 627–41 and Gayle Sherwood, "Ives and Neurasthenia: A Response to Stuart Feder," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54, no. 3 (Fall 2001), 641–643.

<sup>11</sup> Ruth C. Friedberg, *America Comes of Age*, vol. 1 of *American Art Song and American Poetry* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981), 86.

to gold and then fall from the tree.”<sup>12</sup> The song continues in the same fashion through the next several measures with a “melancholy descending vocal line, [and] cloudy harmonies” in mm. 4–6 to the second line of the quatrain.<sup>13</sup> In m. 7 Ives revisits the music of the opening measures, with a similar melody and accompanimental figure, although there is a notable lack of the tonal center that was suggested in the opening measures. The piece ends almost abruptly with steep descending chromatic line in mm. 10 and 11 to the line, “coins between a dying miser’s fingers.” This can be seen in Example 4–1. Here Ives creates a musical metaphor to match Aldrich’s comparison. As Hitchcock points out, these descending notes are meant to represent the actual falling leaves in the text.<sup>14</sup>

Example 4–1. Charles Ives, “Maple Leaves,” mm. 8–11.

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“Maple Leaves” represents a drastic change in Ives’s treatment of the seasonal topic, which can be traced to the philosophical ideals that he held during this time. By 1920, when he composed “Maple Leaves,” he was an admirer of many great writers. His exposure to literature

<sup>12</sup> Larry Starr, *Charles Ives: A Union of Diversities* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 139.

<sup>13</sup> Friedberg, *America Comes of Age*, 86.

<sup>14</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Ives* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 23.

began to affect his compositions in numerous ways, including his choice of song texts.

Burkholder points out that around the time of his engagement to Harmony “Ives began to choose texts to set to music of a more spiritual and often transcendental tone.”<sup>15</sup> This tendency is apparent in his selection of Aldrich’s poem.

From this standpoint in literary history, “Maple Leaves” is an example not of romanticism but of realism. This poem contains many similarities in both text and music to works written during the realist movement in literature, which began around 1870. More specifically, the text of “Maple Leaves” is representative of literary impressionism, a type of realism. Impressionistic poetry according to David Perkins, presents “a scene of rapid notation.” Although “the scene evokes a mood,” he adds that “the poet refrains from comment or discursive interpretation.”<sup>16</sup> This describes the text of “Maple Leaves,” which presents an uninterpreted impression of autumn.

This shift towards realistic texts was a dramatic change in style for Ives, whose earlier works may be classified as romantic (in the literary sense), with which realism is frequently contrasted. Realism, as opposed to romanticism, emphasizes the everyday over the extraordinary. Donald Pizer identifies the movement’s three defining traits:

The first is verisimilitude of detail derived from observation and documentation. The second is an effort to approach the norm of experience – that is, reliance upon the representative rather than the exceptional in plot, setting, and character. The last is an objective...rather than a subjective or idealistic view of human nature and experience.<sup>17</sup>

Ives’s earlier seasonal songs do not exhibit these traits of realism. “Spring Song” does not attempt to realistically observe the coming of the spring season; rather, it is the author’s

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<sup>15</sup> Burkholder, *The Ideas Behind the Music*, 106.

<sup>16</sup> David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890’s to the High Modernist Mode* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Pizer, *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, rev. ed. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 1–2.

subjective view of spring as she experiences it. Its characters, a personified spring and “all the dry brown things,” gravitate towards the exceptional. “Autumn” focuses on the subjective feelings expressed by different elements of nature, and the personification of these elements is as far from an expression as realism as one could imagine.

Rosalie Sandra Perry describes in detail the many ways literary realism manifested itself in Ives’s music, which have here been condensed into list form.<sup>18</sup> These include, among other things:

1. Reproduction of a scene through musical notation, descriptive titles, and essays to demonstrate that he is basing music on middle class concerns.
2. Choice of subject matter from a realistic middle ground and a concern with elements of everyday life.
3. An objective expression based on a subjective perception of reality.
4. A complexity of subject matter used in order to explore the subjective experience.
5. The use of ambiguous endings.

Perry demonstrates that all of these characteristics can be found in the wide body of realistic literature. Wilfrid Mellers also offers a definition, claiming that Ives’s brand of realism contains

acceptance of life-as-it-is, in all its apparent chaos and contradiction; and it is this that encouraged him to employ any and every technique that seemed empirically appropriate, whether drawn from conventional European music, from folk improvisation, from chapel or bar-parlour, or from the sounds of the natural world.<sup>19</sup>

These descriptions of Ives’s music, taken along with Pizer’s definition, can be used to analyze “Maple Leaves.” First, “Maple Leaves” is quite detailed in its description and its documentation of everyday experience. The natural environment of New England, including the changing of the

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<sup>18</sup> Rosalie Sandra Perry, *Charles Ives and the American Mind* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1974), 56–71.

<sup>19</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land: Themes and Developments in the History of American Music* (New York: Hillstone, 1975), 44.

seasons, was integral to that experience, and Ives captures it in “Maple Leaves.” The unromanticized depiction he offers is in keeping with what Pizer refers to as a “norm of experience.” The setting of “Maple Leaves” reflects a concern for the “representative rather than exceptional,” and it treats autumn for what it is, not as a metaphor for something or someone else.<sup>20</sup>

Through an examination of “Maple Leaves,” Ives’s views on objective and subjective expression become clear, in both the text and the music. Perry holds that for Ives, “the subjective experience is the only objective experience,” and that he would have “agreed with Emerson’s dictum not to seek outside the self.”<sup>21</sup> The author of “Maple Leaves” clearly specifies “my leaves” in the first line, immediately letting the reader know that this is his subjective experience. Aldrich was attempting, through subjective experience, to create something universal. This falls in line with Ives’s transcendental philosophy, and in fact, the realist elements of Ives’s songs are the direct result of his transcendentalism, or his reading of the transcendental authors. Perry points out that “Realism was one offspring of Transcendentalism,” and notes that “Emerson embraced the common, the familiar, and the low because he saw in them the link to a higher world.”<sup>22</sup> In the subjective experience of nature depicted in “Maple Leaves,” Ives perhaps saw a glimpse of transcendental universality.

Musically, realism manifests itself in several distinct ways in “Maple Leaves.” First, Ives tried to reproduce in the music realistic events, people, or actions. This can be seen in the changes in pitch language and rhythmic structure at the arrival of the word “gold,” in m. 3, which is the musical rendering of the leaves’ changing colors. It can also be seen in the final measure when the chromatically descending eighth notes represent the falling coins in the text. Perry also

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<sup>20</sup> Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry*, 1–2.

<sup>21</sup> Perry, *Charles Ives and the American Mind*, 59–60.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



compares the complexity of Ives's works, including their ambiguous endings, to literary realism. She explains that realist works are complex because "the truth is complex, and life is a complicated and ambiguous affair."<sup>23</sup> Like the aphoristic songs of the Second Viennese School, "Maple Leaves" is musically complex despite its brevity. It begins rather simply, but increases in complexity as it goes on. This is uncommon for Ives's music, and, as Larry Starr points out, "Maple Leaves" is one of the few songs that does "exemplify the complexifying process."<sup>24</sup> It contains rhythmic and tonal complexity, as well as episodic, unprepared changes between sections. These features seem to go hand in hand with the piece's ambiguous endings, which for Perry are a defining characteristic of realistic novels. "Maple Leaves" seems to end without conclusion or resolution; it simply fizzles out and ends. The text ends on the word "fingers," syllabically set to eighth notes on the first beat of the final measure. Here, the dynamic levels have faded to the lowest point of the song, and the piano plays a single high E marked *8va*. The effect is that the voice is virtually alone in the rendering of the last syllable. This ending lacks any sort of finality, and the song's atonal harmonic language offers no sort of tonal resolution.

Near the time that Ives composed "Maple Leaves," Ives became acquainted with the music and literature scholar Henry Bellamann, who wrote to Ives after receiving a copy of his *Concord Sonata* in order to "tell [him] what a remarkable piece of work it is," and calling the sonata "an extraordinary work."<sup>25</sup> Bellamann was the dean of Chicora College for women in Columbia, South Carolina and a writer who occasionally presented lecture-recitals on the new music of composers such as Casella, Malipiero, and Schoenberg.<sup>26</sup> Bellamann was both a

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<sup>23</sup> Perry, *Charles Ives and the American Mind*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Starr, *Charles Ives: A Union of Diversities*, 139. In general, Ives's music begins complex and is slowly simplified or clarified through the course of the piece. This is exemplified by his development and use of cumulative form.

<sup>25</sup> Tom Owens, ed., "Selected Correspondence 1881–1954," In *Charles Ives and His World*, ed. J. Peter Burkholder (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 204.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

musician and a writer, and all of his early academic positions were in the field of music. As a student, he studied music at Westminster College, William Woods College in Fulton, Mississippi, and the University of Denver, as well as privately in London and Paris. He also received two honorary Doctor of Music degrees from different institutions. His career as a music teacher was a successful one, as he taught at several schools for women before joining the advisory board for the Juilliard Musical Foundation and serving on the faculties of Vassar College and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, respectively.<sup>27</sup> He eventually retired from music in 1932 to concentrate on his writing career. If he is remembered today outside of Ives scholarship, however, it is almost exclusively for his writing, and specifically his novels.

Several months after he wrote Ives regarding the *Concord Sonata*, Bellamann published a lengthy review of the sonata in *The Double Dealer*, a magazine based in New Orleans, praising both the piece and composer highly. The result of Bellamann's efforts would not only aid in the gradual discovery of Ives's music by the musical public but would also foster a great friendship and a creative partnership between the two men. The following year, in 1922, Henry and his wife Katherine visited the Iveses at their home. Katherine, a "first rate" singer, performed some of Ives's songs during the visit, while the composer repeatedly remarked, "Why, they sound just like I thought they would!"<sup>28</sup> Bellamann and Ives would join in one another's artistic endeavors when, in 1923, Bellamann gave Ives some of his poetry.<sup>29</sup> Ives subsequently set two of his poems to music, "Peaks" and "Yellow Leaves." The latter would be the last seasonal text Ives set to music.

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<sup>27</sup> Harry McBrayer Bayne, "A Life in Letters: The Literary Involvement of Henry Bellamann" (master's thesis, Clemson University, 1981), 3, 88–89. In the appendix to his thesis, Bayne gives a general outline of Bellamann's academic career and explains the difficulty of obtaining these records. For example, The University of Denver maintains no record of Bellamann's attendance, but the Denver Public Library was able to present "irrefutable proof" of his attendance.

<sup>28</sup> Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music*, 333.

<sup>29</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, *Charles Ives and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 20.

Bellamann's text for "Yellow Leaves" is simple and straightforward. Untitled in its first printing in 1920, the poem was assigned the title "October" in a subsequent collection of Bellamann's poetry published in 1923, from which Ives took the text.<sup>30</sup> The title "Yellow Leaves" was supplied editorially by John Kirkpatrick in his critical edition *Eleven Songs and Two Harmonizations*.<sup>31</sup> This title seems quite appropriate. Bellamann gives a detailed though brief description of yellow leaves on their branches, using pictorial similes to help the reader to create a mental image of the scene:

Heart shaped yellow leaves  
on thin brown switches  
pointing upward like taper flames  
in windless naves.

Yellow leaves among the green  
like gold coins  
deep in old fountains.<sup>32</sup>

Although relatively short and seemingly lacking in content (when compared with the previous seasonal text that Ives set), Bellamann's poem is a pictorial description of autumn rich in poetic color.

Burkholder identifies Bellamann's poetry as "imagist."<sup>33</sup> "Yellow Leaves," and the whole of Bellamann's poetry, does in fact fit in to the school of poetry referred to as imagism. Ezra Pound, the founder and most prominent member of the movement, cited three main aspects of imagist poetry:

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.

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<sup>30</sup> James Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 553.

<sup>31</sup> Sinclair, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives*, 554.

<sup>32</sup> Henry Bellamann, *Cups of Illusion* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 67.

<sup>33</sup> Burkholder, *Charles Ives and His World*, 20.

3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.<sup>34</sup>

“Yellow Leaves” uses all three of these techniques. First, the simply and directly describes the leaves, along with their appearance and actions. Second, there are no excess words or ornate language that would distract from the image being created. Finally, the free verse lines lack any strict metric regularity. Bellamann’s simple description of leaves in a tree that have changed their color and stand out “among the green” elicits associations of all things autumnal in the mind of the reader. Furthermore, the brevity of the text encourages the reader to form a quick mental image. In this case, the “image” that is created in the poem draws associations to the changing landscape and to autumn itself.

Ives’s selection of Bellamann’s poem may be seen as a reflection upon the deepening of his philosophical ideals during this period of his life. In “Yellow Leaves,” as in the earlier “Maple Leaves,” the seasons neither serve as simple metaphors, nor are they personified and depicted as subjective agents. Rather, in these texts, the seasons are evoked for their own sake, conjured through carefully crafted imagery that serves no further end. Bellamann’s poem is saturated with the seasonal topic while at the same time lacks any overt reference to autumn.

One important focus of Ives scholarship has been Ives’s efforts to create impressions of ideas, events, places, and people in his music. This can be seen in pieces such as *Orchestral Set No. 1: Three Places in New England*, in which Ives used previously composed music to draw associations to historic events and people, and his *Concord Sonata*, which he described in the accompanying *Essays Before a Sonata* as “an attempt to present (one person’s) impression of the spirit of transcendentalism that is associated in the minds of many with Concord, Mass., of over

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<sup>34</sup> Pound, quoted in Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry*, 333. Pound’s statement on imagism appeared as “Imagisme,” *Poetry* 1, no. 6 (March 1913): 198–200, where it was falsely attributed to F. S. Flint. Perkins explains this misattribution along with his quotation of Pound.

a half century ago.”<sup>35</sup> Ives carried the practice of creating impressions in his music from these instrumental pieces into his songs, where he made use of texts with impressionistic qualities. He attempted to recreate the impressionistic or pictorial qualities of the text in his music, enhancing this effect.

The music for “Yellow Leaves” is quite similar in character to that of “Maple Leaves,” as Ives used an impressionistic style for both. Burkholder described its music as having a “Debussy-influenced style.”<sup>36</sup> This is apparent from the beginning with a call for “pedal throughout,” the use of a more pianistic style than was typical of Ives, and whole-tone passages in mm. 14–15. In this same discussion of “Yellow Leaves” and “Peaks,” the other text by Bellamann that Ives set, Burkholder claims that Ives used this impressionistic style in his setting because “he anticipated Bellamann would like [it],” implying that Ives used this style only to please Bellamann.<sup>37</sup> While it would not be against Ives’s nature to compose in a way he thought pleasing to others, as he himself claims to have done so in other cases, there is no reason to presume that the musical style of these songs was used only to please Bellamann, especially since Ives privately set Aldrich’s text in a similar manner just three years prior.<sup>38</sup> The piece possesses a subtle complexity, episodic changes in the accompaniment, and a distinct formal scheme, all of which belong, though perhaps not exclusively, to Ives’s own individual style.

The piece opens with the piano accompaniment, which contains a stepwise descending quarter note figure, beginning on C5, in the right hand. The opening measures seem to evoke A minor, with a repeating A in the bass and the  $\hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$  motion of the descending quarter note

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<sup>35</sup> Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata, The Majority, and Other Writings*, ed. Howard Boatwright (NY: W. W. Norton, 1962), xxv.

<sup>36</sup> Burkholder, *Charles Ives and His World*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> For Ives’s confession to composing music in styles he thought would be pleasing to others, see Ives, *Memos*, 129.

figure. This can be seen in Example 4–2. What is clear from the outset of the piece, however, is that the suggestion of A minor is short lived (to be discussed shortly). The accompaniment figure from the beginning is retained in the subsequent measures, however, containing only slight variations in pitch and rhythm. The melody enters in m. 3, and is derived from the right hand descending figure in the accompaniment, also seen in Example 4–2. The synchronization of melody and accompaniment in m. 3 is completely interrupted in the subsequent measure with the appearance of an F# in the melody on the word “leaves.” At this point, the suggested key of A minor begins to deteriorate, and the melody and accompaniment become increasingly chromatic. Corresponding with this suddenly intensifying dissonance is a sudden rhythmic complexity in both the melody and the accompaniment. This onset of complexity at the beginning of the piece can also be found in “Maple Leaves,” as discussed above. Amid the emerging complexity of the song, Ives especially tried to unify the melody with the accompaniment. This is done through the reiteration of ideas between the accompaniment and the vocal melody. The derivation of the opening melody from the accompaniment has been demonstrated, and Example 4–3 shows other instances of the two parts sharing melodic material, at times simultaneously and other times staggered between measures.

While the complexity of Ives’s music may seem to contrast markedly with the simplicity of Bellamann’s text, Ives relates the two arts (text and music) through text painting. In m. 7, on the word “flames,” Ives uses an upward moving sixteenth-note quintuplet figure, which brings to mind the flickering of a fire, and in the final measures, on the word “deep” Ives employs a low A#, the lowest pitch of the vocal melody. Along with these instances of text painting, Ives captures the character of the poem beautifully, and its atonal, impressionistic qualities match the tone and style of the text.

Example 4-2. Charles Ives, "Yellow Leaves," mm. 1-4.

Heart shaped yel - low

1

*pp*

*l.h.*

*pedal throughout*

leaves on thin brown

4

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Example 4-3. Charles Ives, "Yellow Leaves," mm. 4-8.

leaves on thin brown switches pointing

up-ward like ta-per flames in wind-less

*pp*

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The first section of the text ends in m. 9, and m. 10 sees the first major change in the piano accompaniment. Following this measure the piece climaxes with high, long notes in the melody to the words "Yellow leaves," with large rolled chords over syncopated octaves in the bass, all expressed at the highest dynamic level of the piece. This climax quickly diminishes, per Ives's indication in the score, and the melody rapidly descends in pitch and returns to the *piano* dynamic of the previous measures, although the lush, full accompaniment is retained. In m. 14, the accompaniment changes patterns once again as the vocal melody sustains long, low notes on



the word “deep,” which then fade out to the words “in old fountains,” with the voice reciting the last syllable alone.

This analysis reveals that several of Ives’s seasonal songs share in common the same loose formal scheme; see Table 4–1. This is by no means a “form” in the strict sense, but rather general collections of gestures that Ives repeatedly used to organize these songs and convey their expressive content. These musical gestures mirror the content of the text in every case. This scheme begins with a piano introduction, followed by an introduction of the vocal melody at a moderate dynamic level in the middle of its pitch range. After the first verse or section of the text passes, the piece climaxes with several distinct features: important words are placed on the downbeat, the surface rhythm of the melody slows, the tempo may increase, the highest pitches of the piece appear, the loudest dynamic levels are reached, and the accompaniment becomes more full. The tension then immediately diminishes with the remaining text of the verse: the dynamic level and tempo return to their previous levels and the surface rhythm of the melody slows while its pitch quickly lowers. In the following and final measures of the piece, the dynamic level decreases even further while the voice states the final words of the text in low, repeated pitches or one final, cadencing melodic line, often a descending scale. Ives accomplishes this structure in many of the seasonal songs, from the lengthy “The Ending Year” and “Autumn” to this instance in the brief “Yellow Leaves.” Nevertheless, the format’s presence across these songs should not suggest that the composer conceived of them as a single entity, for it appears in non-seasonally themed songs as well. It shows Ives’s attempts to capture in the music the emotional and expressive content of the text. His musical climaxes always occur at the climax of the text, or as in the case of “Yellow Leaves,” which seems to lack any specific climax, Ives creates one by drawing attention to a certain line of text. That Ives favored this

format is evident from its use in every period of his career, from his earliest setting of a seasonal text to his last.

Table 4-1. Structural Outline of the Seasonal Songs.

	Piano Introduction	Vocal Entrance	Piano Interlude	Return of Vocal Melody	Climax	Conclusion
“In Autumn”	mm. 1–5	m. 5	mm. 14–16	m. 16	mm. 21–22	mm. 22–25
“In April-tide”	mm. 1–4	m. 4	mm. 13–17	m. 17	m. 24	mm. 25–26
“The Ending Year”	mm. 1–4	m. 5	X	X	mm. 25–30	mm. 31–35
“Spring Song”	mm. 1–3	m. 3	mm. 10–12	m. 12	mm. 17–18	mm. 18–21
“Autumn”	mm. 1–5	(m. 2) m. 6	X	X	mm. 16–17	mm. 18–23
“Yellow Leaves”	mm. 1–2	m. 3	m. 10	m. 11	m. 11	mm. 12–16

In light of the discussion of these two songs, it becomes clear that “Maple Leaves” and “Yellow Leaves” are quite similar. As can be gleaned from their nearly identical titles, the texts deal with similar subject matter in an almost identical fashion. Both poems are brief and offer artistic representations of autumn in a strikingly similar way, even though they arose from separate literary movements and were written forty years apart. And while the texts might differ from one another in a few distinct ways, their similarities outnumber their differences. Ives apparently recognized this fact, as both settings are extremely similar.

The similarities in the texts of “Maple Leaves” and “Yellow Leaves” are numerous. First, they both use leaves, which have taken on their fall colors, as their subject matter. In both cases, the poets chose to compare the leaves to coins. “Maple Leaves” differs from “Yellow Leaves,” however, in that it is slightly more personal and a little less abstract. “Maple Leaves” was written

approximately forty years before Bellamann wrote “Yellow Leaves” and before imagism had arrived as a poetic movement. Aldrich refers to “*my maple’s leaves*” in the first line, which gives the poem a narrator. “Yellow Leaves” has no such narrator, yet Bellamann’s text is nevertheless grounded in a subjective, human experience of autumn, one conveyed through the power of his similes. Bellamann’s comparisons of the yellow leaves to “taper flames in windless naves” and “gold coins deep in old fountains” help plant the text in the reader’s experience. This was, in fact, one of the main goals of imagist poetry, per Ezra Pound’s manifesto. In “presenting an image, or enough images of concrete things arranged to stir the reader,” an imagist poem such as “Yellow Leaves” assists in creating a subjective experience for the reader, falling directly in line with Ives’s transcendental belief that the subjective experience is the only objective one.<sup>39</sup>

The most notable differences between “Maple Leaves” and “Yellow Leaves” is that one presents the narrator’s experience, while the other attempts to recreate this same experience empathetically in the reader. This difference speaks to their respective origins in two different literary movements. As previously established, “Maple Leaves” came from the brand of nineteenth century realism known as impressionism, and “Yellow Leaves” from the early twentieth century movement of imagism. Perkins notes that impressionism “was in many ways a forerunner to imagism.”<sup>40</sup> He goes on to describe the many similarities between the two movements:

Both groups of poets strove for direct presentation of the object without discursive reflection...; accuracy, concreteness, and economy in language without “poetic” heightening or ornament; and rhythms that contributed functionally to the presentation. Both groups tended to write free verse. Both groups reacted against those many readers who valued poetry by the importance of its subject and the scale of its emotion, though the Imagists were more confident in urging the irrelevance of these factors.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry*, 333 and Perry, *Charles Ives and the American Mind*, 59–60.

<sup>40</sup> Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry*, 11.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

John T. Gage inadvertently draws the comparison even closer by calling imagism a type of realism.<sup>42</sup>

One of the most important similarities between these two movements is that they are both anti-Romantic in nature. In describing an imagist poem by T. E. Hulme, one of Ezra Pound's biggest influences, Perkins describes imagist poetry's differences from Romanticism, his words applying well both to the imagist "Yellow Leaves" and the impressionist "Maple Leaves":

Hulme[']s verses are anti-Romantic. Within the Romantic tradition to view the cold and starry heavens in autumn would predictably evoke feelings of melancholy, loneliness, and death. If such feelings are present here, it is only in a complex, indirect, and controlled way.<sup>43</sup>

This contrast is important for the present discussion because it points out the drastic change in the type of texts that Ives chose for his songs throughout the duration of his career.

These two pieces are a reflection of Ives's philosophy on art and expression. As this philosophy developed and Ives grew and matured, his musical expressions and styles changed along with them. This is not to say Ives limited himself to a few forms of expression or a single musical style, which is certainly untrue, but rather that his music, in all cases, reflects his highly developed yet diverse ideas about art. "Maple Leaves" and "Yellow Leaves," with their short, abstract texts and atonal, other-worldly sounds may seem impersonal and detached on a surface level, but were in fact highly personal expressions of Ives's mature philosophy.

## **CONCLUSION**

From his early years as a student at Yale until his final days as an active composer, Ives repeatedly turned to texts concerning the yearly seasons. Yet his treatment of the topic, as reflected in the poems he selected and the music he composed, was hardly static. The differences

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<sup>42</sup> John T. Gage, *In the Arresting Eye: The Rhetoric of Imagism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>43</sup> Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry*, 337.

observable across this body of works were not brought about merely by a change of taste on Ives's part, but resulted from his evolving attitudes toward artistic expression. The earliest of the seasonally themed pieces mirrored the style of nineteenth-century parlor songs, and were perhaps written as assignments for Horatio Parker's composition classes. In these songs, the seasonal motif is used a literary device to enhance each poem's main theme of romantic love. Years later, when Ives began his courtship of Harmony Twichell, he returned to the seasonal topic. Two seasonally-themed songs resulted from collaborations between Harmony and Ives, both of which took the seasons as their subjects. Here, the elements of the seasons were personified and used as vessels into which the poet, Harmony, could pour her emotions. Ives returned to the seasonal theme again during his last years as a composer. The musical style of these pieces is a bold, modern one in keeping with the composer's other works of the time. The texts for these pieces represented contemporary trends in literature, and the compositions as a whole display Ives's strong ideals and deepened philosophical convictions.

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## VITA

Warren Kimball was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he received his first instruction in music on the trombone at Baker Middle School. Warren graduated from Baker High School in 2004, after which he attended Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana, receiving the Excellence in the Arts Scholarship for music. He graduated *cum laude* in 2008, receiving a Bachelor of Music with a concentration in church music. In 2008, Warren entered the master's program in musicology at Louisiana State University. Outside of his musicological pursuits, Warren has been active as a performer and leader in several church music programs throughout Louisiana.